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ADVENT COURSES—CHRISTMASTIDE

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SUNDAYS AFTER

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THE CHURCH YEAR

PULPIT LIBRARY

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

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SERMONS, OUTLINES AND ILLUSTRATIONS
FOR SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS

Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Scriptures Proper to the Day.

EPISTLE, 1 CORINTHIANS XII. 1-11.
GOSPEL, S. LUKE XIX. 41-46.
FIRST MORNING LESSON, . 1 KINGS XII.
FIRST EVENING LESSON, . 1 KINGS XII. OR 1 KINGS XVII.
SECOND LESSON, ORDINARY.

I. COMPLETE SERMON

Cleansing the Temple.

And He went into the temple, and began to cast them out that sold therein, and them that bought : saying, It is written, My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves. S. LUKE XIX. 45, 46.



DURING the course of His short earthly ministry our Lord Jesus Christ twice cleansed the Temple of the traffic that took place within its courts. S. John describes the first occasion, which he places just after the wedding at Cana in Galilee, when our Lord went up to Jerusalem to keep His first Pass-over after His entrance on His ministry; and the second occasion is narrated by the three first evangelists, by S. Matthew, perhaps, most fully, by S. Luke, as in the text, most briefly. This last occasion took place immediately after the public entry into Jerusalem; as S. Mark's account would seem to imply, on the following morning. The close of the ministry of the Son of Man was to be marked by a solemn act corresponding to that at its commencement.

And here let us observe in passing, that it is impossible to treat

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the narrative in S. John's as referring to the same event as that described by the three first gospels, without supposing that the fourth evangelist had, for purposes of his own, torn away this episode from its true place at the close of our Lord's life, and placed it at the commencement. Those who have gone so far as to maintain this, contend that it is very improbable that an event of such marked character should have twice occurred within a short lifetime; but not to insist on the unwisdom of settling beforehand what was or was not likely in such a life as our Lord's, let us observe that the action itself, and the language used by our Lord, are reported to have varied very significantly on the two occasions, while the recurrence of the circumstance which provoked our Lord's act on the first occasion would have led Him to repeat it on the second. He could not without inconsistency condone at the close of His ministry what He had rebuked at its opening. Just as similar cases of disease led Him more than once to repeat a miracle, just as similar faults or errors or forms of ignorance in His hearers led Him to utter in a late discourse words which He had already employed in an earlier one, so when in full view of His approaching death, He beheld within the Temple courts the same unhallowed traffic which had met His eye in the first year of His ministry, He acted in the main as He had acted before; He drove the buyers and sellers from the sacred precincts; and those who believe that every event, the least as well as the greatest, in the life of the Son of God upon earth was pre-arranged for the instruction, for the edification of the world, will feel that this solemn repetition of an act of severity and judgment shows it to have some very emphatic lessons which it is our duty to consider.

The occasion presented itself, as I have said, naturally. Arrived at Jerusalem, our Lord, it has been well observed, once more treads the path, which He loved as a child, up to the Temple. In the outer court, He finds a brisk trade going on around Him. Nothing is said on this occasion of the sale of oxen and sheep for sacrifice, which S. John mentions at the earlier date; but there were stands of doves, much in request for trespass, for sin, for burnt offerings, since the poor were allowed to present them instead of the costlier lamb, or kid; and there were the money-changers, who must have had very constant occupation, for every Israelite, in whatever station of life, when he had passed the age of twenty, was bound by the law to pay a half-shekel into the sacred treasury whenever the nation was numbered, and this tax seems, in the course of time, to have become annual. This tribute had to be paid in the exact Hebrew half-shekel, worth about fifteenpence halfpenny of our money, and the premium upon the exchange of foreign money for this sum was a coin which was worth about threehalfpence. But the money-brokers

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of our Lord's time had no notion of contenting themselves with this small commission. Jews came to them from all parts of the world who were obliged to make their offering in the Hebrew coin, and they only supplied the necessary half-shekel for the largest sum that, after driving a bargain, they could possibly exact. It was these fraudulent brokers, no doubt, who chiefly moved our Lord's indignation. He passed rapidly along the court, upsetting their tables, money and all, one after another. He then overturned the dove-stands, and finally, by a mere exercise of His moral authority, He drove the whole company of bargainers, buyers and sellers alike, out from the Temple courts; and in doing this He appealed, as to a word of decisive authority, to an utterance of the great prophet Isaiah, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations.' 'Instead of that,' He sternly exclaimed, 'ye have made it a den of robbers.'

In contemplating this action, we are at first startled by its peremptoriness. 'Is this,' we say to ourselves, 'is this He who is called the Lamb of God? He of whom prophecy said that He should neither strive nor cry; He who said of Himself, "Come to Me; I am meek and lowly of heart"? Is there not the same incongruity between that meek and gentle character and those vehement acts and words?' No, there is no incongruity. As the anger which is divorced from meekness is but unsanctified passion, so the false meekness which can never kindle at the sight of wrong into indignation, is closely allied, depend upon it, to moral collapse. One of the worst things that the inspired Psalmist can find it in his heart to say of a man is, 'Neither doth he abhor anything that is evil.' Bishop Butler has shown that anger, being a part of our natural constitution, is intended by our Maker to be excited, to be exercised upon certain legitimate objects; and the reason why anger is as a matter of fact generally sinful is, because it is generally wielded, not by our sense of absolute right and truth, but by our self-love, and therefore, on wrong and needless occasions. Our Lord's swift indignation was just as much a part of His perfect sanctity as was His silent meekness in the hour of His Passion.

We may dare to say it, that He could not, being Himself, have been silent in that Temple court, for that which met His eye was an offence first against the eighth commandment of the Decalogue. The money brokers, we have seen, were habitually fraudulent; but then this does not explain His treatment of the sellers of the doves, which shows that He saw in the whole transaction an offence against the first and second commandments. All irreverence is really when we get to the bottom of it unbelief. The first great truth that we know is the solitary supremacy of the Eternal God; the second,

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which is its consequence, the exacting character of His love. God is said, in the second commandment, to be a 'jealous God.' In a man, jealousy, impatience of rival claims, impatience of a divided love in another, is, as we know, anything but lovely or moral; and one reason for our condemning it is that no one human heart has in justice any right to the undivided homage of another heart. Of course I know that on certain occasions people use passionate and exaggerated language which might very well imply the contrary; but in morality and fact no man, no woman, may claim all the affections and thoughts of any other man or woman; but that which is a grave fault in a finite and created being like man is anything but a blemish, it is a strict moral necessity, in the divine character. God has, while man has not, a literal right to the undivided homage of His creatures. As the end no less than the author of our being, as containing within Himself all perfections, as being the highest, the consummate good, God has a right to, not a part, but the whole affection of every reasonable being that He has created. He would disclaim His own affection if He could claim less than the whole. His exacting love, which has wandered forth from the glories of heaven to the cradle of Bethlehem and to the Cross of Calvary in quest of the soul of man, would be untrue to man's best interest, no less than to its own beauty and supremacy, if it could consent to share its claims on the human heart with any creature whatever. And this was the deepest meaning of our Lord's protests against the traffic in the Temple. Though that traffic seemed to have a semi-religious purpose, it was in reality irreligious. It was, you observe, the substitution within those walls of another interest for that interest of which the Temple was the symbol and guardian. 'My house shall be called a house—not of commerce, not of semi-sacred commerce—but of prayer. It has for its object Me, and Me alone. You are robbing not merely your fellow-creatures of their substance, but Me of My glory. Ye have made it a den of thieves.'

I. The application of this action and language of our Lord must detain us a little longer. 'My house shall be called the house of prayer.' The Jewish Temple is, in the Bible, first of all a figure of the whole Church of the redeemed. The faithful S. Peter says, 'A spiritual house.' They are Christ's house, says S. Paul, over which as the Son He is set. 'Ye are the temple of God.' S. Paul says plainly to the Corinthians, 'The temple of God is holy: which temple ye are.' Of this spiritual house, Christ is the chief cornerstone; the Apostles and the Prophets are the foundation; and day by day, and year by year, souls are being built into its walls, or, in Scripture language, edified; and when its predestined proportions have been attained, then the end will come. This vast

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organised edifice of souls, to which all ages and countries of the world, the living and the dead, alike contribute, touches us in the shape of the militant or visible Church, which is only, you observe, a fragment of a mighty whole that stretches back into the past, that stretches away into the unseen. 'Ye are come,' says the Apostle, by being Christians, 'ye are come,' at your conversion, not merely to such and such congregations, bishops, pastors to meet your eye; but 'ye are come unto Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; to God, the judge of all; to the spirits of the just made perfect; to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.' And of this house it is true that 'My house shall be called the house of prayer for all the nations.' For this it was constructed, as its leading idea and purpose, the maintenance of a vast and an uninterrupted communion with the eternal source of life.

And this is as true of that portion of the holy body which we call the Church visible or militant, as it is of the rest. The object of the visible Church is not solely philanthropic, although the Church's duty is to do good unto all men, specially to them that are of the household of faith. It is not solely the moral perfection of its members, although the purification to Himself of a peculiar people zealous of good works was certainly a main object of its Founder; still less is it the prosecution of inquiry or speculation, however interesting, about God, because we already know all that we ever really shall know in this state about Him. We have on our lips and in our hearts the faith that was once delivered to the saints. This temple, visible and invisible, is thus organised by its Divine Founder throughout earth and heaven to be a whole of ceaseless communion with God; and as its heavenly members never, never for one moment cease in their blessed work, so by prayers, broken though they be and interrupted, by prayers and intercessions, by thanksgiving and praise, private and public, mental and vocal, the holy Church throughout the world doth acknowledge Him who is the common centre of light and love to all its members, whether on this side the veil or beyond it.

Into this temple also there sometimes intrudes that which moves the anger of the Son of Man, for this spiritual society has its place among men. It is in the world, although not of it, and it thus sometimes admits within its courts that which cannot bear the glance of the All-Holy. And especially is this apt to be the case when the Church of Christ has been for many ages bound up with the life and history of a great nation, and is, what we call in modern language, established, that is to say, recognised by the State, and secured in its

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property and position by legal enactments. I am far from denying that this state of things is or may be a very great blessing, that it secures to religion a prominence and a consideration among the people at large, which would else be wanting to it, that it visibly asserts before men the true place of God as the ruler and guide of national destiny; but it is also undeniable that such a state of things may bring with it danger from which less favoured churches escape. To be forewarned, let us trust, is to be forearmed; but whenever it happens to a great church, or to its guiding minds, to think more of the secular side of its position than they think of the spiritual, more, it may be, of a seat in the Senate and of high social rank, than of the work of God among the people; if, in order to save income and position in times of real and supposed peril, there is any willingness to barter away the safeguards of the faith, or to silence the pleadings of generosity and justice in deference to some uninstructed clamour, then be sure that, unless history is at fault as well as Scripture, we may listen for the footfalls of the Son of Man on the outer threshold of the temple, and we shall not listen long in vain. Churches are disestablished and disendowed to the eye of sense, through the action of political parties; to the eye of faith by His interference who ordereth all things both in heaven and in earth, and who rules at this moment on the same principles as those which of old led Him to cleanse His Father's Temple in Jerusalem.

II. 'My house shall be called the house of prayer.' Here, too, is a law for the furniture and equipment; here is a definition of the object and purpose of a material Christian church. There are great differences, no doubt, between the Jewish Temple and a building dedicated to Christian worship; but over the portals of each there might be traced with equal propriety the words, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer.' No well-instructed, no really spiritual Christian thinks of his parish church mainly or chiefly as a place for hearing sermons. Sermons are of great service, especially when people are making their first acquaintance with practical Christianity, and they occupy so great a part in the Acts of the Apostles, because they were of necessity the instrument with which the first teachers of Christianity made their way among unconverted Jews and heathens. Nay, more, since amid the importunities of this world of sense and time the soul of man is constantly tending to close its eyes to the unseen, to the dangers which on every side beset it, to the pre-eminent claim of its Redeemer and its God, sermons which repeat with unwearying earnestness the same solemn certainties about God and man, about the person and work and gifts of Christ, about life and death, about the fleeting present and the endless future, are a vital feature in the activity of every Christian Church, a means of calling

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the unbelieving and the careless to the foot of the Cross, a means of strengthening and edifying the faithful. Still, if a comparison is to be instituted between prayers and sermons, there ought not to be a moment's doubt as to the decision; for it is not said 'My house shall be called a house of preaching,' but 'My house shall be called the house of prayer.' Surely it is a much more responsible act, and, let me add, it is a much greater privilege, to speak to God, whether in prayer or praise, than to listen to what a fellow-sinner can tell you about Him; and when a great congregation is really joining in worship, when there is a deep spiritual, as it were an electric, current of sympathy traversing a vast multitude of souls as they make one combined advance to the foot of the eternal throne, then, if we could look at these things for a moment with angels' eyes, we should see something infinitely greater, according to all the rules of a true spiritual measurement, than the effect of the most eloquent and the most persuasive of sermons.

'My house shall be called the house of prayer,' is a maxim for all time, and if this be so, then all that meets the eye, all that falls upon the ear within the sacred walls, should be in harmony with this high intention, should be valued and used only with a view to promoting it. Architecture, painting, mural decorations, and the like, are only in place when they lift the soul upwards towards the invisible, when they conduct it swiftly and surely to the gates of the world of spirits, and then themselves retire from thought and from view. Music the most pathetic, the most suggestive, is only welcome in the temples of Christ when it gives wings to spiritualised thought and feeling, when it promotes the ascent of the soul to God. If these beautiful arts detain men on their own account, to wonder at their own intrinsic charms, down among the things of sense; if we are thinking more of music than of Him whose glory it heralds, more of the beauty of form and colour than of Him whose temple it adorns, then be sure we are robbing God of His glory, we are turning His temple into a den of thieves.

No error is without its element of truth, and jealousy on this point was the strength of Puritanism, which made it a power notwithstanding its violence, notwithstanding its falsehood. And as for purely secular conversations within these walls, how unworthy are they in view of our Redeemer's words! Time was, under the two first Stuarts, when the nave of the old S. Paul's was a rendezvous for business, for pleasure, for public gossiping, so that Evelyn the diarist, lamenting the deplorable state to which the great church was reduced, says that it was already named a den of thieves. Is it too much to say that the Redeemer was not long in punishing the desecration of His temple? First there came the axes and hammers of

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the Rebellion, and then there came the swift tongues of fire in 1660, and the finest cathedral that England ever saw went its way. Would that in better times we were less constantly unmindful of the truth that its successor is neither a museum of sculpture nor yet a concert room, and that He whose house it is will not be robbed of His rights with permanent impunity.

III. 'My house shall be called the house of prayer.' This is true, lastly, of every regenerate soul. When it is in a state of grace the soul of man is a temple of the divine presence. 'If any man love Me and will keep My words, My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.' Christ's throne within the soul enlightens the understanding, and kindles the affections, and braces the will, and while He thus from His presence-chamber in this His spiritual palace issues His orders hour by hour to its thinking and acting powers, He receives in return the homage of faith and love, a sacrifice which they delight to present to Him. So is it with God's true servants, but alas! if you and I compare notes, what shall we say? Even when we desire to pray we find ourselves in the outer court of the soul surrounded all at once with the tables of the money-changers, and with the seats of the men who sell the doves. Our business, with all its details, follows us into our private chambers, follows us everywhere into the presence of our God. Our preparations for religious service, the accidents of our service, occupy the attention which is due to the service itself. Sometimes, alas, we do not even try to make the very first steps towards real prayer, and steps which ordinary natural reverence would suggest; we lounge, we look about us, just as though nothing in the world were of less importance than to address the Infinite and Eternal God. But sometimes, alas, we do close the eyes, we do bend the knee, we try to put force upon the soul's power and faculties, and to lead them forth one by one, and then collectively to the footstool of the King of Kings; when, lo! they linger over this memory or that, they are burdened with this or that load of care, utterly foreign to the work in hand. They bend, it is true, in an awkward sort of way in the sacred presence beneath, not their sense of its majesty, not their sense of the love and the beauty of God, but the vast and incongruous weight of worldliness which prevents their realising it. And when a soul is thus at its best moments fatally troubled and burdened about many things, God in His mercy bides His time: He cleanses the courts of a temple which He has predestined to be His for ever, He cleanses it in His own time and way; He sends some sharp sorrow which sweeps from the soul all thoughts save one, the nothingness, the vanity of all that is here below; and so He forces that soul to turn by one mighty, all-comprehending act to Himself, who alone

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can satisfy it, or He lays a man upon a bed of sickness, leaving the mind with all its powers intact, but stripping from the body all the faculties of speech and motion, and then through the long weary hours the man is turned in upon himself; and if there is any hope for him at all, if at that critical moment he is at all alive to the tender pleadings of the All-merciful, he will with his own hands cleanse the temple; he sees the paltriness of the trifles that have kept him back from his chiefest, from his only good; he expels first one and then another unworthy intruder upon the sacred ground. The scourge is sharp, the resistance it may be is persevering; the hours are long, and they are weary, but the work is done at last. 'No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous, yet at the last it bringeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.'

Let us pray for grace lest we should need this scourge; let us pray for grace that, if we do need, we should welcome it. If religion means anything at all, it is an awful, it is an absorbing reality; if attention to its duties have any claim upon our power, that claim is far too serious to admit of rivalry or of interruption. Let us be sure that, in this solemn matter, what is worth doing at all is worth the very best effort that we can possibly give it; and that, for the rest, if we earnestly ask Him, God will so cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that even here we may perfectly love Him and worthily magnify His Holy Name, through Jesus Christ.

H. P. LIDDON.

II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Lord's Supper, and Trust in a Living Redeemer.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 1 CORINTHIANS xii. 4-6.



GREAT German theologian thus speaks of the sacred ceremonies of all religion, in discussing the ordinances which belonged to the ancient people of Israel. 'Every religion,' he says, 'has some few usages in which she seeks to comprehend her entire significance and spirit. These are the sacred rites by us usually termed sacraments, and their existence is quite inevitable; for while every religion, particularly every elevated religion, starts from some

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few fundamental truths, but finds her fulfilment and goal only in life and action, she has still a craving to put forth again her whole contents in some few usages, and cling to these as eternally valid as and for the whole world. These symbolical ordinances have their origin in the inexhaustible vitality of the religion to which they belong, and serve to propagate and renew its significance and spirit.' Such an ordinance in Christianity is, above all, that which, in common parlance, is called the Sacrament, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

I propose, first, to glance very briefly at the various forms under which it has been celebrated, and then to speak of the inward essence of this truth which alone can give it light and meaning and use. Since it was first established, it has gone through every sort of outward change. It has sometimes been received by all Christians every day, as in the Early Church. It has been sometimes received, even by devout Christians, as in Russia and in Scotland, only once or three times a year. It has been received sometimes, as in the Early Church, and by some amongst ourselves, in the evening, by the larger part of Christendom in the morning. It has been received lying, standing, sitting, kneeling. The elements have been administered sometimes, as in early times, by the whole congregation; and sometimes, as in almost all later times, by the officiating clergy. It has been celebrated in some countries only by the solitary priest; in others only where hundreds are present. In the Eastern and in the Early Church it was given to infants: in the Western, and in all later times of the Western Church, only to persons of full years. It has been given in the Roman churches with bread alone, in the Protestant churches with bread and wine separately, in the Eastern churches with bread and wine mixed together. The wine has been sometimes given mixed with water, sometimes pure and simple. The bread has sometimes been leavened, sometimes unleavened; sometimes, as with us, in the form of a loaf; sometimes, as in the Roman and Lutheran churches, in the form of the wafer; sometimes, as by the Greeks, in the form of a roll. It has sometimes been celebrated with lights, sometimes without lights. It has been administered sometimes on a stone tomb, sometimes on a wooden table. Sometimes the table has been called an altar; at other times the altar has been called a table. Sometimes the table has been placed, as with us, at the east end of the church; sometimes, as in the Roman Church, at the west end; sometimes, as in the Early Church, in the middle. Sometimes it has been placed lengthwise, sometimes breadthwise. Sometimes, like the Pope of Rome, and as in the Presbyterian churches, the minister stands behind the table; sometimes with us at the end of the table, sometimes in front. Sometimes it has been administered in the plain

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dress of common life, as by the early Christians and some nonconformists; sometimes in stated robes; sometimes in white; sometimes in black.

Now, these variations, which we can trace back to their origin, have a historical instruction. Some of them may be irreconcilable the one with the other. Some are mere variations of form and time—mere questions of name and words; but they are all more or less compatible with the spiritual realities which, whether within the Sacrament or out of the Sacrament, are the only matters of importance. Let us see what these are.

I. First, it is, by all Christians, understood to be a more solemn confession of their Christian convictions than they make at other times. Those who communicate, whatever else they intend, do thereby declare themselves for the time to be better servants of God—more anxious to do their duty—more anxious to part with their sins. We need not say that all communicants are better than those who are not communicants. Many, perhaps, who never communicate at all will sit down at the marriage feast of the Lamb in higher places than those who have communicated all their lives; but still it is a witness to the invisible Church within the visible, to a standard of life and of things higher than that to which the ordinary world has attained. We renew our pledge. We make our profession, our sacrifice of themselves. In this sense only it is called in our Church a sacrifice. It is this which makes any outward compulsion so entirely contrary to its intention. It is this which made the Sacrament of so many hundred years ago, as a test, so thoroughly repulsive. 'The reception of the Sacrament,' says an eminent modern historian, 'has fortunately never been made,' to any great extent, 'a requirement of the social code, and, consequently has, for the most part, been left to sincere and earnest believers. Something of the fervour, something of the deep sincerity of the early Christians,' so he adds, with touching pathos, 'may even now be seen around the sacred table; and prayers are felt to be instinct with the deepest and most solemn emotion, and may be used there without appearing blasphemous by their contrast with the tone and demeanour of ordinary worshippers.'

II. Secondly, it is the expression of the largest forbearance and charity towards all men. Every one who wishes to partake of it is invited to partake of it. Friends or enemies, agreeing or disagreeing—all are urged to come. In our own Church, at least, no one but scandalous evil livers, or those who have an implacable quarrel, are dissuaded from coming. No member of any other church is excluded. No man is kept away because he is scrupulous, or hesitating, or heterodox, or schismatical, or a Greek, or a Roman, or Lutheran or

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a Presbyterian. As far as we are concerned, we are, in this respect, in communion with the whole of England, and with the whole of Christendom. We do not partake alone; we partake with others; and this is the real meaning of the word 'communion.' In the original, it is not only partaking, but joint partaking. It is communion with others, communion, as I have just said, with the whole of Christendom in idea, but also specially with our own friends, with our own households, reminding us of our duty to them, and of theirs to us. They, according to S. Paul, are the body of Christ, with whom we communicate. We are God to them, and they to us.

III. Thirdly, it is a thanksgiving—a Eucharist: that is the meaning of the word 'Eucharist.' It is a thanksgiving for all the blessings that we have received. In the Early Church the thanksgiving was chiefly for the fruits of the earth, which the corn and the wine represented; but it includes our gratitude for all the blessings of life, for our restored or continued health, for our home, for our friends, living or departed, who have helped us along the weary path of life, for our English birth and education, for our knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, for the sunshine cast over this dark world and the next by the blessed hope of immortality which this day brings before us. The Eucharist is the contemplation of the human feeling of gratitude.

IV. Fourthly, it is also the consecration of memory. In former days there used to be long disputings by what means in the Sacrament the presence and the thought of Christ were brought near to us. Some believed that it was by the magical transformation of the bread and wine through the hand of the priest. Some believed that it was through the effect of the imagination on the part of the communicant; but one of the clearest and keenest sighted of the reformers rightly shows that the chief means by which this thanksgiving, the communion, the sacrifice of the ordinance, were brought home to Christians was by memory, by remembrance of what had been, by the remembrance of the experiences and the blessings of our own lives, above all, by the remembrance of the original Last Supper, and of Him who founded it. And this is what is directly expressed in His own words: 'Do this in remembrance of Me.' Whatever else the Sacrament may be, it is, as it is called in the English Prayer Book, 'a perpetual memory,' or memorial. The Last Supper, the account of the Last Supper, is a part of the gospel story which you may be quite sure is absolutely and unquestionably quite historical, never contested by any one, related in one of the earliest books of the New Testament long before any of the gospels were written, in the first Epistle of S. Paul to the Corinthians. It is the most authentic monument of our Saviour's life and death, and it carries with it,

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more or less, the whole history of the Passion, and the whole mind of Jesus Christ as represented therein. Remember this, and you will remember quite enough to reconstruct the essentials of Christianity. For, further, this is why the Lord's Supper is so peculiarly Christian, and so peculiarly good for us, that by our serious frame of mind, by our union with each other, by our gratitude, by our memory, it brings before us the truth, that the main object of the religion of Jesus Christ is to make us like Him. There is no other communion with Christ, except through His Spirit, and through partaking of His character. Whatever books, whatever examples, whatever events, better enable us to understand our duty and our destiny, better enable us to understand God's will in grace; and God's will in nature, these, whatsoever they are, are the true companions to the altar. These will enable us better to conceive what is that moral and intellectual attraction, which is the mind of Jesus Christ, which ought to be the ambition of humanity, and which is the image of divinity.

'O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road
That leads us to the Lamb !'

A. P. STANLEY.

Diversity and Toleration.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God who worketh all things in all. 1 CORINTHIANS xii. 4-6 (R.V.).

I. THE Corinthian squabble is a test specimen of a constantly recurring crisis in the gradual realisation of the true relation between man and man and between man and God; epidemics of keen divergence of opinion occur at intervals when denunciations hurtle through the air, when rivals depreciate each other's gifts of oratory, statesmanship, or administration, as mere dishonest charlatany. For a little while the battle rages, cleavages seem unpassable, and then time the healer brings death the emancipator, and the used-up machines of the great men who have denounced each other's gifts, are brought here to this 'temple of silence and reconciliation,' where side by side they rest; their epitaphs bearing witness to the inspired declarations, 'differences of administration, but the same spirit,' and the homage rendered equally to all illustrating the patent common-sense fact that if we would roll the old chariot of the world along, some must find the break-power while others do the pulling,

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and that diversity in operation is not necessarily contradiction in aim.

How wise, how elevating is the judgment of S. Paul! 'How dare any of you,' he would say, 'depreciate in another, or exaggerate in yourselves, a single gift that you possess? Know that all bodily endowments, all mental strength and beauty, all clearness of perception, all spiritual gifts, flow from one and the self-same source.' 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.' The earth education of man is not designed to be a battle-ground for jealous individuals, but the training-school of a race brotherhood, in which 'each should do for all what he alone does best.' In the unfolding of the Father's purpose the gift of each is needful for the whole. To perfect the social order each must live and labour for the brotherhood of man. 'As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,' for all gifts are perverted, degraded, misused, if not consecrated by the Love that 'never faileth' and that 'seeketh not her own.'

II. In its broadest application the verdict of the Apostle delivers us from the narrow-mindedness of erecting false and artificial barriers of distinction between nature and grace, the spiritual and the secular, as though there were a separate deity for each department of creation. The world's Father cannot be thus analysed into departments and divided against Himself. The eternal distinction which appeals to man's volition and instinct of sonship is not between nature and grace, but between right and wrong. All that is sweetest and noblest in music, painting, architecture, all that is truest and best in poetry, literature, science, comes from the Father of Lights. 'There is one body'—the universe—and 'one spirit'—the divine evolving intelligence within it.

Humanity is the body of God, the Church is the heart of that body, and we are the Church. We, each one of us personally, are possessors of some gift, some conviction, some insight, some facility, some advantage, some quality of heart, which is ours in trust for the body. Our gift is the measure of our responsibility and the obligation of our serviceableness to the race. Be careful lest in the haste and fret and selfishness of life you fail to minister your gifts one to another as good stewards of the mysteries of God. Be appreciative, tolerant, receptive towards your brother's gift, though you may be unable to see exactly how it fits in with your own mode of acting and thinking.

III. And, further, carry this thought of the working of the self-same Spirit boldly into your estimate of God's government of the world. The fearful puzzles around you are not really contradictions.

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Only love God, and all things work together for good. 'Standeth God behind the shadow.' Behind the jarring of the creeds, behind the hostilities of parties, behind the misery of the many, behind the dark shadow of life's educative discipline, 'standeth God.' We cannot fit it all now. One day we shall know that it could not have been otherwise, and that all is not in spite of, but because of, His love. On every Mussulman's tombstone in India are inscribed the words 'He remaineth.' Yes, He remaineth. If the religion of Islam can thus recognise the unchangeableness of God, the religion of Christ should write large on every Christian heart, 'He remaineth'; 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

CANON WILBERFORCE.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

The Lost Opportunity.

And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. S. LUKE xix. 41, 42.



LET us apply the incidents of the passage to the case of our own spiritual advantages by considering first the opportunity given, then the opportunity limited, and lastly, the opportunity lost.

I. Let us dwell first on the opportunity given. 'If thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace.' What are the things, the saving knowledge of which belongs to our peace?

1. First, it is to know Christ, His name—the Prince of Peace, His covenant—the covenant of peace, His revelation—the Gospel of Peace; it is the bond of peace used to bind all believers in sweet communion, and a legacy of peace was His last, best gift to His Church; He is our peace, enmities are abolished by Him, partition walls are broken down by Him, He blots out the handwriting of ordinances by His Blood, He makes all thing blameless by His righteousness; He makes peace, secures peace, purchased peace, to them that are afar off and to them that are nigh.

2. But in order to this saving knowledge in Christ, repentance and faith are necessary, and both these are things which belong unto our peace—repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus

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Christ.' God will speak peace to His people and to His saints, says the Psalmist, but it is upon one condition, 'Let them not turn again to their folly.' But repentance is not the only thing that belongs to our peace, neither by itself would it ever give us peace. It may show that we are no longer disaffected towards God, that we desire no more to trample on His laws, and to be no more disloyal to His throne; but repentance is no expiation, it atones for no insult, it removes no curse, it opens no prison doors, it pledges God to no determination; it just shows that we are willing to avail ourselves of forgiveness if a suitable propitiation be found. Hence the other chief thing which belongs to our peace is faith, faith in Christ. The covenant we make with God is by sacrifice, and faith in this sacrifice propitiates all His ancient displeasure. 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

II. But I pass on to the consideration of our second point, on the opportunity limited, 'If thou hadst known in this thy day.' The words plainly imply that in extending to men the offers of salvation, heaven had special and favoured seasons, times when these offers are pressed upon them with peculiar earnestness, or are accompanied with more than ordinary facilities for their acceptances, as 'In this thy day,' is the emphatic expression; and again, in the forty-fourth verse, 'Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation'; and S. Paul quotes from Isaiah, that sublime passage, 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' We cannot mistake such testimonies. They teach that both to nations and to individuals certain opportunities for repentance are afforded, which, as being specially easy to improve, it must involve special and aggravated guilt to neglect.

III. And this brings us to the last point we were to consider, or the opportunity lost, 'But now they are hid from thine eyes.' This suggests solemn thoughts. The image of the great teacher is still before us, of all spiritual opportunity being compared to a day, and we think of a man who has abused, or wasted, or slept away all his daylight hours, awakening to the remembrance of a great work to be done just as the sun goes down, but all is vain. The sun, whether of nature or of grace, knows the time of 'his going down'; and he who works not while it is called To-day will find that 'the night cometh when no man can work.' In regard to the way in which this Gospel day, this day of acceptance and salvation may be withdrawn from us, and the things belonging to our peace be hidden from our eyes, I cannot speak particularly; thus it may be that our means of grace may be withdrawn. Candlesticks may be removed from individuals as well as from churches, and by sickness, by removal by decaying

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faculties, by any or many of life's incidents, we may come to mourn the loss of those outward accessories to which instrumentality we had owed all our early awakenings, but these because they were not valued or were not used to profit, God suffered to be taken away. Or more awful possibility still, our day of grace may be departed because the Spirit of grace has departed. We must not forget this possibility, though there be not in the wide world one living soul of whom we would affirm it to be true. There is a sin unto death, there is a quenching of the Spirit, there is a resistance of the Holy Ghost unto final departure, there is a rebellion and vexing of that blessed agent until He turn and become our enemy. The what, the how, the when, the where, we draw a veil over these; suffice it that all uncherished convictions, all disregarded warnings, all triumphs obtained over our better impulses and holier thoughts tend that way, and are drawing the soul on by little and little to the points at which God severs eternally the day of all spiritual opportunity, and closes all our accepted time.

D. MOORE.

The Ignorance of the Soul.

And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. S. LUKE xix. 41, 42.

OUR Lord coming from Bethany had just turned an angle in the road crossing the Mount of Olives, and what a scene burst upon His view! Beyond the valley of the Kedron, which lay at His feet, there was the city of Jerusalem, its marble roofs flashing in the springtide sun. It was so beautiful that scene, and yet He burst into tears. What drew those tears? The fairest, yet saddest of all sights, man in his ignorance, ignorance of his end, of his opportunities, of his dangers.

I. Jerusalem was a fair type of a human soul, fair in its beauty, but ignorant:

1. Of its true future. It was to be the mother of nations as the birthplace of the Church, but it preferred its own petty pride in an unreal present. And like many a soul, chose present enjoyment instead of future glory.

2. Of its true happiness. The whole history of the nation had pointed to the coming of the Messiah as the climax of its hopes, and the restorer of peace and happiness, but they preferred the temporary peace of compromise with the civil power, and tried to find their happiness apart from Christ; so many an ignorant soul tries by

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truce with evil to obtain a false peace, that it may enjoy what the world can give.

3. Of its true friend. Christ came the friend of man, and they crucified Him, choosing in His stead, first Barabbas and then Cæsar. But Barabbas was a robber, and their friend and king whom they chose, Cæsar, battered down Jerusalem and crucified them. How like the human soul, thinking those are its friends who flatter it that they may ruin it, and forfeiting the friendship of God.

II. Again, Jerusalem, like the soul, was ignorant of its opportunities:

1. Of repenting. Now for the last time they had an opportunity of walking in the 'via purgativa.' Probably every soul that is lost was ignorant of its last call to repentance, and thought there would be another chance.

2. Of learning. Now for the last time they could tread the 'via illuminativa.' Christ had been teaching them for three years, the time of teaching was drawing to a close, so most souls mean to learn more about God and His revelation before they die.

3. Of grace. All our Lord's teaching to His Apostles in the last chapters of S. John was of the 'via unitiva,' the need of abiding in Him.

III. Yet again that city, like the soul, was ignorant of the dangers that threatened it:

1. The enemy at the gates, which our Lord foresaw and foretold, seemed so far off, so how little we realise the nearness to us of our spiritual foes.

2. Its own helplessness. Had it not strong walls? had it not successfully resisted many sieges? often withstood strong enemies? So sometimes we think that because we have broken the bonds of old temptations, we shall never be really conquered.

3. The eternity of its loss. Jerusalem had had its reverses before, but they had been but temporary, the longest, the captivity in Babylon, for seventy years. Eighteen hundred years have passed, but there has been no resurrection for the Jew. How little we grasp what the possibility of eternal loss means!

The sentence on Jerusalem, written by the hand of God, was 'they knew not the time of their visitation.' God grant it may not be written by the recording angel as the story of your soul.

REV. ALFRED G. MORTIMER, D.D.

OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

A Saviour's Sorrow for a City's Sins.

And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it. S. LUKE xix. 41.

‘**H**E beheld the city.’ The city which He is now beholding is not Jerusalem, it is London; London, you will say, with the kingdom of heaven visibly set up in its midst, with its churches and chapels, its hospitals and schools: its countless gathering points of Christian enterprise and Christian missions, London, therefore, a sight of joy to its Lord. London, we admit, is the capital of England, with very much in the past and present history to show that on it, as on Jerusalem of old, the special purpose of God has rested, in connection with His kingdom; but London, we must remind you, has another and darker picture presenting itself to Christ’s view: London, with its sharp and terrible contrasts and its increasing wealth, and side by side with that its increasing pauperism, its fulness of bread and its abundance of idleness here, its destitution and squalid misery there, its great crimes ever and anon coming to the surface and startling us with their horrors, its secret sins which, if we could look down into the depths, would probably startle us more; and underneath and amidst them and pervading them all, giving life to some, intensity to others—one sin, its intemperance, its excessive use of strong drink, the shame alike of our city and our land. It is on this sin, even as I believe that it is on this that Christ’s eye is resting to-night, that I would ask you to fix your attention for a few minutes.

I. He beholds the city. And London is but one of the many cities and towns in our land on which the same all-seeing eye is resting. In Liverpool, the head constable says in his report, ‘23,458 cases of drunkenness passed through the hands of the police during the past year, being an increase of nearly 4000 over the previous year. Of criminals who were proceeded with summarily or by indictment, 3342 males and 2300 females were habitual drunkards.’ In Edinburgh, in a very able report published on the state of the lapsed classes, the criminal, the abandoned, and the pauper, it was stated that all these numbered 45,000, one-fourth of the whole population. A large majority of paupers, nine-tenths, it was stated, could be shown to have become what they were by intemperance. Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, and our larger towns throughout the kingdom, have each their own terrible figures to give: each, if the means of collecting them were at hand, to be reproduced in the smaller towns and villages throughout our land. Can you wonder that as the knowledge of

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these things broke upon a committee of the Lower House, in the midst of an extensive inquiry, it should have reported with the startled surprise of one who had been roughly awakened out of sleep, that drinking prevails to a frightful extent among the labouring classes; that it is not confined to the male population, or to persons of mature age, but that it is spreading to an alarming degree among women and the young; that it is found to fill our prisons, our workhouses, and our lunatic asylums and our penitentiaries; that it may be shown by accumulated and undeniable evidence to be sapping the foundations of our prosperity, blighting the future, and lowering the reputation of our country, and destroying at once its physical strength and its moral and religious life; and, again, that 'the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint,' and unless remedy be speedily and effectively applied, consequences the most disastrous to us as a people cannot be long averted?

II. Shall the Church of Christ own herself defeated in the contest, and destitute of all resources? Has Christian love lost its ingenuity, or Christian zeal its spirit of enterprise? No, never let our faith in the might of our risen Lord fail us at such a crisis of our history. Rather let the Church of Christ go to her own armoury, and out of the treasure-house of her own past experience, take the stone and the sling which shall slay the giant. There have been giants before this; evils which by the Church's neglect, perhaps, have been allowed to grow to inordinate proportions. It has been by special mission, organised by special united effort, that the Church has been enabled to overcome the evil. There was the giant of Mohammedanism, you will recollect, in the Middle Ages, where the followers of the false prophet had taken possession of the holy city, and a special mission was organised. The Crusaders went forth with their lives in their hands to wipe away what they deemed the foul reproach which had fallen upon their faith. The crusade was the true type and parallel of the conflict with moral evil which yet awaiteth the Church. There has been the giant of heathenism. In later days, the missionary societies were organised to attack it in its stronghold. The giant of heathenism reigned in the ignorance of the people, and the Church of God organised special missions, which for the last twenty-five years have been carried on.

In the words of a distinguished statesman, the province of government is to make it easy for the people to do good, difficult for the people to do evil. The supposed necessity of the drinking-houses is theirs: they at least have a right to say how far that necessity really exists. There is a time drawing on, if we read prophecy aright, when the times of the Gentiles shall have been fulfilled, and Jerusalem, with her children restored to her, shall again be first in her Saviour's

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love: the time when the receiving back of the branch broken off shall be a very life from the dead, when they shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, and the law of the Lord once more going forth from Mount Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem, the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge and glory of God, even as the waters cover the sea.

H. J. ELLISON.

The King entering his Capital.

And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it. S. LUKE XIX. 41.

I. PREACHERS have chosen to paraphrase the words and to talk of the 'Redeemer's tears over lost souls.' When Jesus speaks of the Son of Man as coming to seek and save that which was lost, I adhere to His language, I take it to be the best. When it is said, 'He beheld the city, and wept over it,' I understand that the city is meant, and not something else. If it seems to us an unworthy subject of Christ's sorrows that a divine polity which has lasted so many generations, which God, and not man, had set up, which had been the witness to the world that it is God, and not man, who binds the societies of men into one, should be about to pass away with its temple, its sacrifices, all the outward signs of what it was within, I think we can have read sacred history to very little purpose. See whether every page of the Old Testament is not setting forth to us the glory of national life. See whether it was not through their national life that patriarchs and prophets were led to believe in Him who is, and was, and is to come, who would be with the children as He had been with the fathers, who would reveal Himself more to each generation, till at last the earth should be filled with His glory. And now the Jew was deliberately casting aside this marvellous education. He was exalting a Mammon God into the throne of Jehovah. His religion was becoming another name for a selfish calculation of his individual interests. Sects were rending the commonwealth in pieces. Do we want more than this to account for Christ's tears, and for the words, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace.' 'Oh that you would have owned Him who would have healed your savage religious strifes, would have bound you into one family, who would have shown you that the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, is as truly your God as He was theirs.' 'But now these things are hid from thine eyes.' A thick impenetrable blindness is coming upon you. You are cut off from the vision of the past. The brightness

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of the ages to come will be lost upon you. For when God's light is changed into darkness, when your desire is to conceal yourselves from Him, what else can look beautiful to you, what is there for you but ever-deepening gloom over heaven and over earth?

II. 'For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.'

Surely these are direct words, they cannot be reduced into figures. We cannot talk of casting a trench about 'lost souls,' or laying them even with the ground. The language belongs, if there is any truth in it, to a city and a temple. And therefore we read immediately after: 'And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the Temple. But the chief priests and the scribes, and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.'

So Christ carried the war with Mammon into the very place where he was affronting the majesty of the Father. So He testified, that if Mammon was not cast out, God would depart from that place and leave it desolate.

The chief priests and the Pharisees felt that the battle was to be a deadly one. The Galilean was confronting them in their own capital. If He was the King He had found them out; He was calling them to answer for their government over the people. He might destroy them. First they would try if they could not destroy Him. The experiment must be made cautiously. 'The people were very attentive to hear Him.' Their influence was trembling. There might be an insurrection. Who could say where it would end?

We cannot afford to divert this history from its direct purpose. Is not England a nation which Christ has cared for as much as He ever cared for Palestine? Is not London a city which He may weep over as much as He wept over Jerusalem? Have we known the things that belong to our peace? Have we asked Him to put down our factions, to give us His love for our hatred? Are there none that sell and buy in our temples? Must not they be purged?

F. D. MAURICE.

OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

He Beheld the City.

And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it.

S. LUKE XIX. 41.

I. **W**HY did Christ weep? It has been supposed that the picture of that approaching ruin and desolation which was coming so rapidly upon the unconscious capital, at once appalled and overwhelmed Him. He sketches that picture in strong and rapid strokes Himself. 'The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another.' It was a dark and dismal picture. And that which added to it an element of profoundest gloom, was the unconsciousness of those whom such a doom was threatening. Scarce a soul in Jerusalem seems to have been greatly sensible either of the national decadence or of its own individual peril. The pride of the Jew, like the pride of the Spaniard, seemed to be as haughty in defeat as in triumph, and as insolent always as though there were nothing to fear. And yet the sceptre of Israel had departed. The king was a puppet and his throne a jest. By any ear that listened, the tramp of Roman legions threatening the city and the Temple might already be distinctly heard, though it was nearly forty years later before the troops of Titus trampled priests and women under the cruel hoofs of a relentless cavalry. And all that Christ saw, as He stood there and looked down upon beautiful Jerusalem—as distinctly as though it were happening at that very moment!

Must it not have been this that made Him weep? I do not doubt that it was an element in that divine and unmatched sorrow. But that sorrow loses its profoundest significance unless we see that it had another and deeper element still.

His own words tell us what made Him weep. 'If thou hadst known,' He cries, 'even thou in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes!' It was this spectacle of human insensibility, of eyes that would not see, and of ears that would not hear, that broke the Saviour down. It was the consciousness that the Temple and the sanctuary, Mount Zion and the Holy Place, were all alike girt about by a people that did not care. He had spoken to them and they had not hearkened. The Being who had led their fathers out of their bitter bondage into a goodly land, and who had in so many ways revealed Himself in love and mercy to them, had come again in that era of national misfortune

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and humiliation, and they had not been willing to listen to Him. The love of goodness, the longing for righteousness, the aspiration for nobleness and spiritual emancipation—these were dead in them. And it was this that made Christ weep. He could pity their coming sorrow, and He did. But His heart ached, most of all, as He contemplated that inmost evil in them which made those sorrows so necessary and so inevitable.

II. Another question is suggested by these tears of Christ. What did they move Him to do? Remember, that as far as the Jerusalem of that day was concerned, He Himself intimates the case to have been hopeless. The insensibility of the generation to which He spoke was impenetrable, and its doom therefore was certain. And yet, amazing folly, as it must have seemed to more than one of those who watched the career of this strange Being, He threw Himself into the work of rousing and alarming Jerusalem, as though its future might instantly be transformed. From the Mount of Olives He descended straightway to the Temple, and the last week of His life was spent in daily intercourse with its chief priests. How vain, as it then appeared, were all His words! How little availed his sternest tones to stir the slumberous pulses of His time! How unmoved (save by a bitter and personal animosity) were the leaders and teachers to whom He spoke! And when that scornful indifference on their part was exchanged at last for a distinctive enmity, with what needless prodigality, as doubtless it seemed even to some of His own disciples, He flung away His life. Flung it away? Ay, but only how soon and how triumphantly to take it again! The defeat of Golgotha meant the victory of the Resurrection. The failure of the Cross was the triumph of the Crucified; and though by living and preaching He could not conquer the indifference nor awaken the apathy of Israel, by dying and rising again He did. It was the chief priests who, amid the anguish of Calvary, were the most scornful spectators and the most relentless foes. It was 'a great company of the priests,' who, on the day of Pentecost, scarce fifty days after that dark and bitter Friday, 'were obedient unto the faith.' And thus the tide was turned, and though Jerusalem was not rescued from the Vandal hordes of Titus, Jerusalem and Judea alike became the home and the cradle of the infant Church.

C. H. POTTER.

OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

The Visitation of God.

Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. S. LUKE xix. 44.

THERE is a saying of a well-known divine quoted in the *Christian Year* which is well worth remembering. It is, that Holy Scripture is like a good portrait, which seems to keep its eye on you as you move about the room from the wall on which it is hung. The truth of this saying becomes clearer to us as we get older, and know, on the one hand, more of human life and human nature, and, on the other, more of the true meaning of the Bible. It is a saying which, from the nature of the case, applies, with different degrees of force, to the different parts of the Bible. Many of us, it seems to me, must feel that it applies with especial fitness to the gospel for to-day. This is one of those gospels which will bear preaching on year after year. It is too many-sided, too full of serious meaning, ever to pall upon the spiritual taste. As year by year the passing months bring us to the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, and as we pause before this wonderful gospel and mark the tears of Christ, and listen to His words uttered over the old Jerusalem on the eve of its doom, we cannot but perceive a larger and a larger meaning attaching to it as it is interpreted more and more fully by our increasing experience. And thus it says more to young men than it says to boys, and more to the middle-aged than to the young, and more to the old than to the middle-aged. Its deep and awful import is verified for those who think at all by the events of life and by the lessons of history, although, of course, this verification cannot add anything to its intrinsic worth, but only to our sense of it. Like those schools of scenic beauty, or those masterpieces of art in foreign lands which so many of our countrymen are now hurrying to visit, it may be for a second or a third time in their lives, this passage must be visited again and again if we are to do it any sort of justice. We feel the fascination of the picture before we can account for it to ourselves at all satisfactorily, and as a rule, the music of our Lord's words has long, very long, been treasured in memory before we began to appreciate their bearing on the life of man.

'Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.' They are the closing words of Christ's lament over Jerusalem. As He is on His way from Bethany He crossed the Mount of Olives, and began to descend towards the valley of the Kedron, the city came into view. He did not speak at once; it was only when He had come near,—that is, had descended a slight declivity, and then had mounted an intervening ridge, which had for a moment hidden the city from His

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eyes—that He paused, as if to rest, on what travellers have described as a ledge of smooth rock.

Thus He beheld the city, allowing His eye to rest upon it with deliberation, first on one and then on another of its sacred sights, reviewing, no doubt, by the rapid but perfect glance of His mind the whole course of its eventful history. And then, He wept over it, not by an impulse of uncontrollable feeling but because He willed to do it. He wept by an action as deliberate as that by which He beheld the city lying out before Him. And then at last He spoke, and the point of His words, and, therefore, no doubt, the cause of His tears was not so much, mark this, not so much the coming destruction of Jerusalem as the reason for its destruction; not the ruin and collapse of the great Temple, but that which had rendered it inevitable; ‘Thou knewest not,’ He said, ‘the time of thy visitation.’ Read over our Lord’s words and you will see that this is the governing thought in them. Twice He refers to the ignorance of the visitation of things that belonged to Jerusalem’s peace, and this, the cause of the coming doom, introduces and closes the sentences in which the doom is itself described.

First comes the expression of sorrow: ‘If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.’ And then follows prediction of a threefold woe: ‘For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another.’ And why? The reason which follows contains the substance of the opening words, ‘Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.’ What was the event which is here described? A visitation is, properly speaking, an ‘over-looking;’ that is the strict meaning of the original word. It is thus used to describe the office of the Apostle in the Acts of the Apostles, and the actions of a bishop in S. Paul’s first Epistle to Timothy, and from this employment of the word in Scripture it has come to be applied to the court, for such it is, which, from time to time, a bishop is bound by the old law of the Church to hold in order to review the state of his diocese. But this word is more commonly applied in the Bible to God’s activity than to man’s, and the visitation of God is sometimes penal, sometimes judicial, and sometimes it is a season of grace and mercy. The day of visitation of which S. Peter speaks, in which the heathen shall glorify God for His good works is, we cannot doubt, the Day of Judgment; and Job uses the Hebrew equivalent to describe the heavy trials which had been sent to test his patience. In the language of Scripture God

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visits man in grace and mercy, as He did the Israelites in Egypt after Joseph's death, as He visited Sarah in one generation, and Hannah in another, as He visited His flock, to use Zechariah's expression, in Babylon. It was such a visitation as this that our Lord had in view. He Himself had made it, and when He spoke it was not yet concluded. This aspect of His Incarnation, of His coming down from heaven as a divine visitation to Israel, has been celebrated in prophecy. 'After many days thou shalt be visited'—so ran the promise in Ezekiel. 'The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple,' so sang Haggai; and when Christ was born the *Benedictus* arose round His cradle: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people'; 'through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us.' And the popular voice, at one time at any rate, echoed these words of the Temple poet—'A great prophet is risen up among us, and God hath visited His people.' Yes, Israel had been among visited, and Christ was the Visitor. He passed Israel in review before Him; He visited each class of the population; all the departments and energies of the national life, the actual rulers of the land afar,—Herod, and Pilate, the Roman centurion, and the farmer of the Roman taxes; the great religious teachers and Rabbins, the priesthood, its chiefs and subordinates; the lawyers and scribes who played so great a part in the later life of Israel: the religious sects, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the political religionists, the Herodians—these one after another He passed before Him. Nor was His inspection confined to the well-to-do or the influential. He spent most of His time and His effort among the common people in their towns and in their villages, in their houses and in their occupations, in their joys and in their sorrows, at a wedding feast in Cana, or by the funeral bier at Nain. He was constantly among them, holding His court, as it were, and giving them opportunities of doing Him homage; it was a visitation for all Israel, but especially it was a visitation for Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the place chosen of God to put His name there; Jerusalem, the city of David; Jerusalem, the seat and the centre of the ancient covenanted worship challenged the inspection of His just and merciful eye as did no other place in Palestine and its streets, its palaces, its schools of law and divinity, above all, its Temple and its services, were successively examined. And presently all would be over; the visitation would be ended by the death of the Visitor in agony and shame; and He Himself, it is plain, already thinks of it as over, and after the manner of the ancient prophets, and of Isaiah especially, He anticipates as present a future which has not yet arrived; He treats the present moment as already of the past. He places Himself in thought in its midst,

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and the city is beleaguered already by the legions of Titus and is hastening to its fall, and He cries, 'Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.'

'Thy visitation.' Let us remark two characteristics of this visitation of Jerusalem by its monarch. It was unobtrusive and it was final. The visitation of Jerusalem by Christ was unobtrusive: there was nothing of outward pageant or of royalty to greet the Son of David: there was no royal livery, no currency bearing the king's image and superscription, all these things had passed into the hands of a foreign conqueror, or, in parts of the country, into the hands of princes who had the symbol of independence without its reality. There was not even the amount of circumstance of state which attends the reception of a visitor to some modern institution, a visitor who only represents the majesty of some old prerogative or some earthly throne. As Israel's true King visits Jerusalem, He always reminds us of a descendant of an ancient family returning in secret to the old home of his race: everything is for him instinct with precious memories; every stone is dear to him, while he himself is forgotten. He wanders about unnoticed, unobserved, or with only such notice as courtesy may accord to a presumed stranger. He is living amid thoughts which are altogether unshared by the men whom he meets as he moves silently and sadly among the records of the past, and he passes away from sight as he came, with his real station and character generally unrecognised, if, indeed, he is not dismissed as an upstart with contempt and insult. So it was with Jerusalem and its Divine Master. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. It may, indeed, be asked whether the unobtrusive character of His visit did not excuse the ignorance of Jerusalem. But there is ignorance and ignorance. There is an ignorance which we cannot help, which is part of our circumstances in this life, which is imposed on us by Providence, and such ignorance as this, so far as it extends, does efface responsibility. God will never hold a man accountable for knowledge which God knows to be out of his reach; but there is also ignorance, and a great deal of it, in many lives for which we are ourselves responsible, and which would not have embarrassed us now if we had made the best of our opportunities in past times, and just as a man who, being drunk, commits a street outrage, is held to be responsible for the outrage which he commits without knowing what he is doing, because he is undoubtedly responsible for getting into this condition of brutal insensibility, so God holds us all to be accountable for an ignorance which He knows to be due to our own neglect. Now this was the case with the men of Jerusalem at that day. Had they studied their prophets earnestly and sincerely, had they refused to surrender themselves to political dreams which

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flattered their self-love and which coloured all their thoughts and hopes, they would have seen in Jesus of Nazareth the Divine Visitor whose coming Israel had for long ages been expecting. As it was, His approach was too unobtrusive for a generation which looked forward to a visible triumph.

I. The subject suggests a wide range of applications: let us confine ourselves to a few, and the most obvious. 'Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.' Our Lord's words account for the delay and ruin of nations. Nations have in all ages, as Jerusalem had of yore, their day of visitation. All seemed to be going smoothly; there is peace on the frontier, there is prosperity at home; yet there is something rotten that does not meet the eye. So it was with the great empire of Rome under more than one of its later rulers; so it was with France during the earlier part of the last century, when she was swiftly moving on, as we know now, into the whirlpool of revolution. At these times some act of justice is pressed upon the national conscience by a great writer or a great minister; some moral or social reform of vital importance to the well-being of the people is advocated by an authority whose claims are beyond dispute; some measure of precaution against possible danger is recommended; some fatal prejudice, some variety of popular infatuation, leading directly on the road to ruin, is deprecated in terms which should rouse the conscience of the country. This is the day of visitation. It comes, it lasts only for a time, it is disregarded, and it passes; and then, after a time, surely comes the penalty, the popular war or the delirium of revolution, or the ostentatious collapse of all that means virtue in national life, until at last the enemy cast his bank around the doomed community, and compasses it round, and lays it even with the ground, and all is over. And on some ruin, perchance, faith guides the hand of history while she traces the words, 'Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation'

II. And our Lord's words explain, too, the decay and fall of churches. As a whole, the Church of Christ cannot fall: our Lord Himself has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her: but particular churches may fall all too easily. Where are those seven Churches of Asia now whose names live for ever in the pages of the Apocalypse, and to which such solemn warnings were addressed by our risen Redeemer Himself? They are, most of them, little better than a heap of ruins; what once was so fair and beautiful has long been trodden beneath the feet of the infidel. Where are now those Churches of Northern Africa which, during the first four centuries, played so great a part in the history of Christendom? They had their day of prosperity; they had their day of visitation, and were laid waste by the Vandal and the Moor. Nay, more, what was the case of

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the Church of Rome at the beginning of the sixteenth century? The best and saintliest minds in her knew full well that there was much that needed improvement. There was nothing to be said for such rulers as Alexander vi.; nothing for such enterprises as Tetzels sale of indulgences; nothing for fictions which were known as fictions, but which were still treated, speaking officially, as truths. The revival of learning had disinterred from libraries the fair vision of the Church of the first Christian ages, and men could not but feel that it was in many ways unlike the Church of their own day. Had a serious effort been made and persevered in to restore this purer and nobler past, it is probable that the great disruption of Western Christendom which followed would never have taken place or, if it had taken place, it would soon have ended. The visitation came, but they who then wielded authority never really heeded it; they played with the opportunity of reform as though it had no real justification in Scripture and in history, as though it was merely an eccentric variety of the spirit of rebellion. They hoped that it would die away, spend itself, and be forgotten; they would wait and see. And so it gathered strength; it passed beyond their control, and half of Europe forthwith broke away, or was made to break away, from the old Western Church.

III. An individual life is not less illustrative of the truth before us. We know what a man means when, speaking of his bodily health, he tells us that he has had a 'warning.' He means that some symptom of latent disease has shown itself, some unsuspected weakness in the system, some failure of strength which points to greater care respecting the diet, or exercise, or sleep or work; and if no attention is paid to the 'warning,' we need not be doctors in order to know what sooner or later is likely to follow. And so in the moral and spiritual life God's ways of visiting us are many. There are two in particular which it is well to bear in mind. One is friendship, the influence of a powerful character granted us for a few years or less, and then withdrawn. We never noticed how that friendship came about. Events led to acquaintance, acquaintance deepened into an intimacy, and then change of circumstances or of home or death put an end to it. At the time it was difficult, so we say, to see in that anything remarkable; all was so natural, all was so commonplace; and yet, as we look back on it, we can clearly see that it was remarkable. A real influence has been withdrawn, designed as we can now see to enforce on us some neglected truth, to cure us of some serious fault, to make some vital difference in the direction of our life or in the ingredients of character. It has been withdrawn, and for us that day of visitation has passed, and the solemn question is, With what result?

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Great reason is there for prayer, that at the critical turning-point of our career we may have, in our Lord's words, eyes to see and ears to hear, that we may distinguish God's visitations in life from what is ordinary in it, that we may remember that in every life, even in the most highly favoured, there is sooner or later a visitation which is the last. O Saviour of the world, who by Thy grace and precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, O Lord!

H. P. LIDDON.

The Time of Visitation.

Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. S. LUKE xix. 44.

TO the account which S. Matthew gives of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, which has just been read as the gospel for the day, S. Luke adds the passage of which these words are part. Jerusalem, the home of God's elect, which had been considering for ages the promises of prophecy, did not understand what was going on, and what she was called to do when her Lord came with mercy and with judgment to try her heart, and therefore at this moment, when He was come near and beheld the city, He wept over it, and He saw before Him, in spite of the hosannas of the multitude, a city and a people favoured beyond all people, who yet had after all missed the great work, missed the great prize which God had set before them, and for which He had been so long preparing them. The hope of Israel, that for which they had been waiting for hundreds of years; that for which they had endured so much; that which they had all believed in and trusted to in the very depths of their affliction, the hope of Israel, the long-expected Saviour, had actually come, and they would not know Him. 'If thou, even thou, hadst known in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace!' Here was the moment come to blot out all their sin, to repair all their disasters; here was the moment different from all other times in their history, in which God was speaking to them as He had never spoken before to the honest and good heart, if only the honest and good heart were there. There, before their eyes, stooping in outward show to the humblest, but splendid in all the royalty of goodness and mercy, the loving-kindness of the Highest was with them, such as their fathers had never dreamed of. If in former times they had misunderstood God's dealings, here was the day of redemption, which, if they accepted it, would more than make up for all that had gone wrong before. 'If thou, even thou'—the people whom God had enlightened and blessed above all other people—'if at least in this thy day'—when the Son

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of God had come to bring peace and truth in His own person, to speak to thee, to small and great, face to face—if thou, after all former sins and failures, hadst—now, at last, now, in the greatest of thy chances—only known how near thou wert to the things which belong to thy peace; how great the blessing within thy reach; how easy to stretch out thy hand to the unutterable gift—if thou hadst but known!

But Jerusalem would not know her hour of grace. It passed away, and the Lord saw that it was gone, and He wept over the city which He had loved; for between Him and His grace rose the rebellious, obstinate, inflexible will of free agents—free to choose the good as well as the evil. The trial was over, the choice had been made, the things of peace were hidden from her eyes. Now there was nothing left but for the terrible choice to work itself out, first in the High Priest's palace, at the tribunal of Pilate, and on the hill of Golgotha, then in the ruin which was to make the ears of all that heard tingle. 'The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.'

Let us to-day, with these thoughts in our minds, take these solemn words home to ourselves in the trial which is ever going on of our own lives. The day of visitation, we may be sure, comes in one shape or another to us all. Not to know the time of our visitation means not to recognise the significance and the bearing of those trials for which we live, which search our hearts and test their soundness. It is not to know when God is giving us some fresh opportunity of good, not to be alive to the openings and the secret leadings which come to us all in due season for a decisive step in the higher choice and the higher life; not to recognise when the time comes, as it comes to all, which is meant especially to suit our necessities, to offer to us a door of escape, to encourage and assist us in doing some good thing for God. There are many different kinds of these visitations of the Most High God, but they are always the possible beginnings of new and better things, of mercies more than had ever been vouchsafed before; but there is about them this danger, that they to whom they come may not know 'the time of their visitation.' And there is, of course, an additional danger when God's visitations are not as they were to the Jews, accompanied by outward signs of His presence and power. The days were, you know, when that presence was revealed by miracle and sign and visible judgment, and He was known to be near us by the earthquake and the wind and the fire. But now it is only the 'still small voice' in the secret of our hearts, which tells us

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that the Lord is near; and if men could be heedless of the manifest signs of His hand and will, they are in danger of not hearing the still small voice. The real dealings of God with us are out of sight; we cannot now lay our hands on this and that, and say: 'Lo, here,' or 'Lo, there'; we cannot make certain of each movement, each call, each instance of God's working, and we are but poor interpreters of His providence and His counsel. The Spirit when He witnesses with our spirit, does so in ways which are secret between our heart and Him, and no one can reveal that secret, and make it plain and certain. If, then, man's blindness and selfishness could withstand the outward calls, the manifest token, how much more the whisper of conscience and the silent guidance of the arm of God! If men were not persuaded that the time of their visitation was upon them when they beheld the Lord heal the sick and raise the dead, we may fear for ourselves lest we miss what is really our opportunity—our day of visitation—when it comes in the usual course of our life, seeming to be nothing more than the common things which happen to us all; seeming to be clothed and veiled in the ordinary changes and chances of our mortal life.

There is, for instance, one sort of visitation from God which many of us are going through now, as real as if we had to make up our minds, or take our side in some difficult question of right or wrong, in some critical decision as to whether we will walk in the ways of evil or of good. How many of us are leading a quiet and peaceful life, an uninterrupted life, without anything apparently to try us; without anything greatly to disturb or trouble us—no great sorrow, no great pain, no great fear, no great disadvantage to struggle with, no great care to weigh us down. There are the common temptations and burdens which belong to the lot of all men; but these surely are little to speak of when we think of what other men have had, have now to go through, what might have come upon us, and has not. And in this kind of life we go on undisturbed, it may be, from year to year, no great change happening in it for worse, or for what the world would call for better. We know what we have to do; we work if we must work; we have our time to ourselves if we are not bound to work; we look out on the course of other men's lives, on the ups and downs, the wonderful success, the tremendous ruin which goes on around us, the wars and commotions of other countries, 'the distress of nations with perplexity;' but we look on at a distance; none of these things come nigh to touch us; peace and quiet are the order of our lives, the regular unbroken order. I can imagine people sometimes being almost frightened at the perfect peace in which their lives go on, with everything given them that they could really need, kept safe from all they fear; all seems to come so easily and so

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naturally that I can almost understand people thinking that something dreadful must be waiting for them some day to make up for the long time that they have been left free from trouble and pain. But this is a fatalist theory. God does not deal with us in that way; He does not make a certain amount of evil weigh against the balance of a certain amount of good. He gives us good and evil by a different mode—one which we cannot understand, but which He administers, knowing what is in each man's heart and is each man's necessity, and which we are sure is not one of caprice and cruelty. He is a loving God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. Let us enjoy those things; quiet days, health, and peace, and safety, and let us go forth in the mercy that has been with us so long.

But there are two things to be remembered. One is that without superstitiously vexing ourselves with the misgiving that God does bring evil upon us in proportion to good, it yet is obviously true that all this quiet cannot go on as it is for ever; that we must expect, some time or other, some of the severer trials of life; that it is not likely that we should always escape pain, or vexation, or sickness, so entirely, at least, as we are doing now. We are still men, and under the covenant of sickness and death. This is one thing, and the other, and even more important is this—this time of quiet, of leisure, it may be of freedom, at any rate, from the burdens of sorrow and pain, unimportant and monotonous as it seems, is a time of visitation. We can, perhaps, hardly imagine ourselves under God's searching and trying eye; we can, perhaps, hardly imagine the awful possibility of our being under God's disapproval, and of His finding us wanting. But surely it is a time when God is visiting us, visiting us as truly as He visited Jerusalem when He sent His Son to tell her of the Kingdom of Heaven; visiting us by mercy and by blessing, as truly as He visits and searches other men by His chastisement and judgment. In this time of peace, and regular work, and quiet days, and nights of sweet sleep, He is trying us, He is training us, and He is giving us time to fit ourselves, insensibly it may be, to meet the harsher ways of His providence; He is seeing what is our true and real mind and heart, whether we have it in us to be thankful and generous; whether so much mercy and goodness will draw our trust and obedience to Him; whether we could be made better, as He would make all men better if it were possible, by giving them the desire of their hearts, and keeping them safe from the evil which they fear.

This is our time of visitation, and how do we do it? Do we ever think as we ought that it is a time of visitation? When some great trouble or sorrow comes upon us, then, if we have any religious feeling at all, we have no difficulty in understanding that God is visiting us; then we feel it to be quite natural to recognise His searching and

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trying hand in what befalls us. Whether we bow to it or resist it, it, at any rate, sobers and solemnises us. We feel—to our cost, perhaps—we think, that the Lord is near, and that the hand of the Lord hath touched us. But do we equally remember that the hand of the Lord is upon us, when He continues keeping us safe from day to day, driving away sickness and death from our door, giving us time and strength and spirit to go on doing our work and our labour until the evening, filling our hearts with joy and gladness, heaping good upon us, and upon our children? Do we remember that surely He is observing how we take all this? We may be all this time growing more and more selfish, more and more unthankful, more and more hard, more and more away from God, more and more in love with the pleasant things of this present time; we may be self-indulgent and indolent, and find it too much trouble to stop and think to some purpose of what we owe, of what we must be to God; too much trouble to see whether we are receiving our good things as Christian and religious men, or as those whose hope and portion are in this life; too much trouble—and, indeed, it is a very real trouble often—to see whether we are saying our prayers in good earnest, and asking God to help us not to abuse His blessing. Surely it is but too easy in the midst of peace and mercy to forget the great seriousness of life, where we are going, whom we have to deal with, what He has given us to do, whom we shall meet when we are dead, how we shall give an account of what we have had and enjoyed. And if we let all this slip out of mind we are missing our day we are hearing the call of God without hearing, we are failing under our appointed trial, the trial of God's loving tenderness, just as if the trial was one of severity and sorrow and suffering, and we were murmuring. The time of our visitation is upon us, and we are not knowing it.

DEAN CHURCH.

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IV. OUTLINE ON THE LESSONS

The Prophet of Judah.

And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back: and he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread and drink no water, thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers. I KINGS xiii. 20-22.



EW histories in the Bible teach us more persuasively than this the simple duty of obeying God's will, so far as we know it, under all circumstances. In order to follow the lesson, we have to consider, first of all, what was the mission or work of this prophet of Judah; and then what the nature of the temptations was to which he was exposed; and, lastly, his punishment. And let me add that it is only necessary for you to have the first lesson of this afternoon's service open before you in order to follow what I am going to say.

Now, the subject of this history has no name in Holy Scripture except that of 'the prophet of Judah'—a name which he must have shared with many others at the time. But although his name is not given, his work was of the utmost importance. He is one of that great multitude of human beings who, in all generations, have been among the most influential actors on the scene of human life without being recognised as such. In the eyes of the men of that time Rehoboam and Jeroboam were the two important persons in Palestine. In reality, many of their subjects were much more able to control events for good or for evil; and, in particular, for the moment, the prophet who came out of Judah was more important than either of them.

In order to understand the high nature of the mission of the prophet of Judah, we must remind ourselves of the circumstances under which Jeroboam had become the king of Israel. When Solomon yielded to the suggestions of his idolatrous wives so far as to set up idol shrines close to the holy city, he was warned by the prophet Ahijah that, as a punishment, ten out of the twelve tribes would revolt against the royal house of David during his son's reign. The old jealousy of these tribes towards Judah, suppressed during the

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splendid reigns of David and Solomon, broke out under the feeble and unwise rule of Rehoboam. The revolt was immediately occasioned by Rehoboam sending Adoram, a very incompetent commissioner, to investigate some complaints of over-taxation. The commissioner was stoned to death. The grandson of David himself only escaped a similar fate by a sudden flight. Rehoboam intended at first to subdue the revolted tribes. He was warned by a prophet that what had happened was divinely ordered. The Jews must not shed the blood of their brethren. The ten tribes were therefore constituted as a separate kingdom under Jeroboam, who at once applied himself to the measures which were necessary to secure its independence. And thus we find him fortifying Penuel beyond the Jordan in order to guard his realm against the conquerors of the upper Asia, and rebuilding Shechem, which had been destroyed by Abimelech, to be his residence and his capital.

Now, if Jeroboam's activity had been all of this kind there would have been no occasion for the mission of the prophet of Judah; but Jeroboam had to deal with the religious question—then, as now, much too important a factor in the life of a nation to be ignored by its political chiefs. I say, then as now—*now* as then. Some few years ago the late Mr. Buckle hazarded the opinion that religion was gradually becoming of less and less importance among the causes which affect the life and conduct of the nations of Europe; and since he wrote those lines events have been busily engaged in proving their inaccuracy. We have had Europe convulsed by misunderstandings into which religion has entered most powerfully; and at this very moment, whether we turn our eyes to Italy, or to Spain, or to Germany, or to France, or across the Atlantic to Brazil, or to our own country, everywhere we find ourselves face to face with questions of the first importance, and into which religion enters more conspicuously—I dare to say it—than has been the case since the seventeenth century. It cannot be ignored even in this material age, as it has been termed—it cannot be ignored—that passion and virtue of the human soul (its sublimest virtue, its most enduring passion), which we name 'religion.' Man cannot so far deceive himself if he believes in another order of being—if he believes in another world at all—as to dream that that which affects it is of less importance than that which touches this our earthly perishing life. Religion will always command the suspicion or the sincere respect of the rulers of men, for the simple reason that, whatever be the amount of truth or falsehood of a particular creed in the service of which the religious principle is enlisted, the religious principle itself is at once the purest and the strongest force that can sway the conduct and control the sympathies of their subjects.

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Now, Jeroboam, like many a statesman since his time, looked upon religion not as the happiness and strength of his own life, but simply as an instrument of successful government. He appears to have anticipated, or almost to have anticipated, Hume's cynical theory of an established church as a means whereby a sensible government, taking possession of and satisfying the religious sentiment of the people, would protect itself against outbreaks of religious fanaticism. Jeroboam saw that if, after the separation of the ten tribes, Jerusalem should still continue to be the religious centre of the whole nation, sooner or later it would inevitably become again the political centre too. If the ten tribes were to preserve their political independence of the descendants of Solomon, they must, he thought, have a separate and independent religion; and if such a religion did not already exist, then it must be invented. This was Jeroboam's motive in instituting the worship of the golden calves at Dan and at Beth-el, at the northern and southern extremities of his dominions. It was not idolatry in its grossest form. In the prophets Hosea and Amos the distinction is clearly drawn between the worship of created objects and the worship of the one true God under forbidden symbols; and Jeroboam, no doubt, during his sojourn in Egypt in his early life, had caught the idea of a symbolical worship of Jehovah under this particular form, from the worship of the Egyptian Apis. But such a worship, he must have known, was strictly forbidden to the Jews. He must have known that the worship of the gold calf cast by Aaron himself had brought on the people a sentence of extermination from which they were only saved at the intercession of Moses. He knew, too, that the law had confined the Jewish priesthood to one particular tribe, and yet, when the Levites emigrated into Judah after the separation, he made priests of any who would. In spite of the clear instructions of the law, he changed the divinely appointed date of the Feast of Tabernacles; and, finally, he made himself the spiritual chief of the ten tribes, and in that capacity he proposed to offer a public sacrifice of inauguration in the new sanctuary at Beth-el.

It was a high day, we may be sure, at Beth-el when the scene described in this afternoon's lesson took place. The king, Jeroboam, arrayed in royal state, was standing at the altar to offer incense. The multitude was looking on in silence at an act which meant nothing less than the inauguration of a new religion, when suddenly a prophet from Judah rushed forward into the open space. In burning words he foretold the birth of a prince of the house of David who would slay upon this altar the very priests that burnt the incense. The altar, he said, would be defiled by the sacrifice of human bones; and, just as Isaiah named Cyrus the deliverer of his

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country four centuries before that monarch's birth, so here, more than three centuries before his date, this nameless prophet foretells the name and the work of Josiah as the predestined destroyer of the false religion invented by Jeroboam. As a miraculous sign that his words would prove true the prophet further announced that the altar would be rent, the ashes upon it scattered. Without waiting to see whether the sign was fulfilled, Jeroboam stretched out his hand to lay hold on the prophet, accompanying the act with an order for his arrest. The king's hand stiffened miraculously; at the same moment the altar was shattered and the ashes were poured out. Jeroboam was crushed by the double miracle. He entreated the prophet to pray for his restoration. His prayer was granted, but the new worship at Bethel and at Dan was publicly and fatally discredited. God, it was thus seen, was against its promoters. It was destined, the people knew and felt—it was destined to perish.

Here, then, we see the greatness of the mission with which the prophet of Judah was entrusted. He was to Jeroboam what Samuel was to Saul after the victory over Amalek. He announced God's displeasure at the most critical moment of his life, when an uninterrupted success was crowned by high-handed rebellion against the gracious Being who had done everything for the rebel. Jeroboam had a divine warrant for political separation from Judah: he had no warrant whatever—only because it seemed to him to be politically expedient—to found a new religion. The prophet placed the king under the ban of God. He uttered also the condemnation of his new religion—not, mark you, in the streets of Jerusalem—not in the deserts along the Dead Sea coast where he would have been safe out of harm's way; but at Beth-el, the very sanctuary of the new creed, face to face with its originator and its patron who was surrounded by his court and surrounded by his soldiery, did this messenger of God utter his ban. It was a service of the utmost danger; it was a service of corresponding honour. He went to Beth-el with his life in his hand under the stress of an overmastering conviction, and the sentence which he pronounced withered up the system which was bursting into life. It had its effect—its lasting, its awful effect—on the whole history of Israel down to the captivity.

The prophet of Judah, then, although nameless, was historically and morally a great man. He had, so far as we know, one great duty in life to do—a duty which demanded heroic resolution. He did it manfully. But our public official life may be one thing, our personal, private, spiritual life another. A man is not saved from temptations because he plays a great part in the Church or in the world. Public success is, alas, no guarantee whatever against private, individual, irrevocable failure.

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And here we reach the second point; the temptations to which the Jewish prophet was exposed in the discharge of his mission.

The prophet had been bidden by the very inspiration which sent him on his errand to eat no bread and drink no water in the land of Israel, nor to return to Judah by the way along which he came. Beth-el was not far from the frontier, so that the command might easily have been obeyed. What was the object of the command? Eating and drinking has in all ages, in all stages of civilisation, been considered a token of good fellowship, and the true worshippers of God were no longer able to hold fellowship with the men of Beth-el, who were, in Jewish eyes, idolaters and excommunicate. And the prophet was to return a different way in order to avoid the emissaries of Jeroboam who might bring him back, and tempt him to some compromise unworthy the honour of God and fatal to the complete success of his mission.

I. Now, the first temptation to disobey this command came from Jeroboam himself. Jeroboam had found that, king though he was, he could not crush the man of God by his power. Could he win him over by social attentions? Could he render the awful message, of which the prophet was the bearer, less serious in the eyes of his people, by making a public show of being on good terms after all with the bearer? It was not, we may be sure, to honour the prophet, or to express his own thankfulness for the restoration of his hand, that Jeroboam invited the prophet of Judah to his palace to refresh himself with food and to give him a present. Jeroboam merely illustrates the law of opposition to the work of God in all ages. The world's maxim is, 'Put it down by force if you can, and if that fails then be civil to it; then teach it to feel at home with you; then take it into your pay; corrupt it.' So it has been, again and again, in the history of Christendom. Men, who in humble life have been great agents in promoting moral and spiritual improvements, have got on in the world, been promoted, and have lost their moral power. Why is this? Was it not that the world which quailed before their early, simple, fearless faith, has succeeded at last in enticing them to its palace, and in making them eat the bread and drink the water of good fellowship with itself? They have given it pledges, and they cannot, if they would, be free; they cannot be as they were; they cannot always draw back when they would. The world holds them to the admissions which they have made in its favour, and when they find that resistance is ineffectual, they give up the game, and they drift on with the tide of events, and end, not unfrequently, as the champions and apologists of that which they were sent to rebuke. When a great church historian, speaking of a particular party, says that the apostolic temper was conspicuously wanting in the higher

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places of the Church, the explanation is that the Jeroboams of the time had succeeded, and that the prophets of the Most High, having on their lips a message to rebuke the world in the name of the justice and of the love of God, had ended by making common cause with it. And something of the same kind took place with Christendom, as a whole, after the conversion of Constantine, when heathendom, finding itself no longer strong enough to crush the Church, endeavoured, and, in some respects, not without success, to make it eat bread and drink water in its Beth-el. And yet it was not difficult for a man of the temper of the prophet of Judah to decline Jeroboam's invitation. Such an invitation cannot have said much to his inclination; it cannot for a moment have embarrassed his conscience. Jeroboam's entreaty for the prophet's prayers only expressed his fears, not his repentance. His wish that the prophet should accept his hospitality was plainly at issue with God's command; and a suggestion to disobey, coming from the headquarters of disobedience and rebellion, was easily dismissed. 'If,' said the prophet, 'thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, nor eat bread nor drink water in this place.'

II. A more serious temptation followed, and with a different result. The prophet had taken his homeward road, when an old prophet, who lived at Beth-el, was told by his sons of what had happened to the King of Israel at the inauguration festival. The old prophet determined to endeavour to bring the man back. He rode after the prophet of Judah, found him sitting, no doubt wearied by his exertions and his long fast, under a terebinth tree. The old prophet, having ascertained that this was the prophet of Judah, asked him to return with him. The prophet of Judah at first refused, on the very ground that he had pleaded to Jeroboam: God had forbidden him. The old prophet saw that, in order to conquer this resolution, he must have recourse to fraud. He said unto him, 'I am a prophet also as thou, and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But,' adds the sacred writer, 'he lied to him.'

What was this old prophet? Was he a false prophet or a true: a true prophet seeking his personal edification in an interview with a man who manifestly had such power with God, or a false prophet endeavouring to tempt the prophet of Judah to an act of disobedience which might ruin him? The probable answer to this question would seem to be that the old prophet at Beth-el was a true prophet, in so far that he really had the prophetic gift, but that he was not a good man. Like Balaam before him, he had heavenly endowments, yet personally he was not a man of principle. He was a religious

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adventurer who had a divine commission, and even supernatural gifts, yet who placed them at the service of the world, at the service of Jeroboam. The distinction between official title, or even great personal endowments, or spiritual accomplishments, and personal character, is plain enough. Many bishops and clergymen have ministered in the Church of Christ with full, undisputed, indisputable authority; with, it may be, conspicuous ability, yet without personal, spiritual earnestness and character. It is of course miserable work for the men themselves, and for their people; but God's gifts, whether of authority or of genius, do not necessarily accompany high, moral, and spiritual worth. Judas was not less an apostle because he betrayed his Master. The old prophet was not less a prophet because he had given himself to the service of Jeroboam.

Why should the old prophet have wished to bring the prophet of Judah back? His motive would probably have been a mixed one. He wished to see a remarkable man who has just made a stir in the world; but this was not his only or his deepest motive. He had made a false move himself, and, perhaps half unconsciously to himself, he was uneasy at the idea of a brother prophet who could take a line so much higher, so much truer, so much more heroic, than his own. He would, if he could, bring him down to his own level. At any rate, he would put his high spirit and mettle to the proof. And, perhaps, behind this there was a feeling that, if he succeeded, he would stand very well indeed with the King of Israel, who could have no objection to witness the moral humiliation and the severe punishment of a man who had so signally discomfited his own favourite scheme of governing Israel by manufacturing for it a new religion.

And where the king had failed the old prophet succeeded. His garb, as the prophetic dress is afterwards described so vividly by Zechariah, his garb marked his office. His white hair spoke of the added authority of age. 'A hoary head,' says Solomon, 'is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness.' There is no walk in life, even the most sacred, to which hoar hairs do not add a lustre and weight. To be old is to have been tried; it is to have had experiences; it is to have passed through vast tracks of thought and feeling; it is to have learnt something of the necessity, perhaps something of the majesty, of patience; much of life's actual weakness, pettiness, failures, insignificance, much, it may be hoped, of its possibilities for greatness. To be old is, so far, to have approximated, at however immeasurable an interval, towards the eternal years of God. The fundamental idea of reverence for antiquity, whether in institutions or in men, lies in the sense of its distant likeness to the uncreated, the everlasting Being; and, therefore, wherever man has had the instinct of his true dignity among the creatures, old age has

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been held in honour, and has been readily credited with a high and commanding authority. But of all the sad spectacles in the moral world one of the saddest is when age descends to abuse its high and sacred prerogatives ; when the love and trust and veneration which it invites are only accepted and used to mislead or to chill those who give it. And this spectacle, alas, is seen not unfrequently. The old prophet of Beth-el is not dead. Shivering on the brink of his grave from generation to generation, he cannot bear to see a younger race undertaking duties from which he shrank. Who has not heard of young men with noble, although, it may be, uninstructed, conceptions of duty and of honour, going to ask an aged friend or relative if it is not possible to realise them, and meeting with a shrug of the shoulders and a cynical smile, ' Young man, when you have lived as long as I have, and have come to know something about the world as it is, you will find out that these high-flown ideas are but the dreams of youth, and that the true secret of life is to do what you can for yourself in any way that you can do, and to leave other people and concerns to take care of themselves.' Who has not heard of young clergymen, impressed deeply with the seriousness and reality of their office, with the boundlessness of our Divine Redeemer's love, with the reality of His work—His present enduring work—upon souls by His Spirit and through His Church ; young men anxious above everything to do their duty not grudgingly but with all their hearts, going to some old incumbent whose life and work have been a gigantic failure to do spiritual good to any human being, and then being told that all this activity was unnecessary and mischievous, and that the old way of doing as little as you could, was the really religious course for a clergyman, and that increased services, and increased communions, and increased care for souls, and increased reverence for all that touches God's service, are unnecessary or unspiritual, or, as the phrase runs, ' signs of a party,' and that the true object is to get on quietly, with as little disturbance of accustomed routine as possible. Others eat bread and drink water at Beth-el. Why should you be singular ? And in some cases, alas, the tempter's word has been listened to, and men who might have been eminent and devoted servants of Christ have been chilled to the very heart by the words of those whose experience and enthusiasm they have trusted at the outset of their career.

No, certainly, we have not to look very far, or to listen very long, in order to discover that the old prophet of Beth-el is anything but dead. Ay, and if he cannot carry his point in any other way he will still plead overpowering religious motives. An angel, he will say boldly, has spoken to him, too, by the word of the Lord, while his conscience whispers to him that it is a lie. He will invoke the

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sanction of heaven against heaven's best and purest inspirations. He will talk about a religion which, if it is notoriously unproductive and slothful, is spiritual, forsooth, in proportion to its barrenness and its sloth; a religion which combines the highest satisfactions of conscience with the entire indulgence of personal inclination or ambition. 'I am a prophet also, as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'

Many a man who could withstand Jeroboam to the death quails before the confident imposture of the old prophet, before this solemn appeal to God against the obligation of God's own guidance and commands, before this invocation of the eternal justice to patronise the laxity and self-seeking which he has already condemned. So it was with the prophet of Judah. He would have died rather than have closed with Jeroboam's offer. Looking at the sacred garb, at the white hairs, of the old prophet of Beth-el, he listened to that false appeal to his own Lord and Master, and he fell.

Do I say that young men are never guilty of extravagant enthusiasms, and that old men are not bound in charity to set them right? Far from it, but it is one thing to pour cold water on a noble and a burning impulse, and another to give it a right direction. The misery is when older people, forgetful of the lofty mission of age, exert their authority to stint, to cramp, to stiffen, all the higher aspirations of young life; to teach young men and women that religious enthusiasm is always folly; that high views of duty are a morbid state of conscience which will be outlived. It may succeed. Old age at the moment may succeed. Its success, be certain, will cost it an everlasting heart-ache.

III. The thing was done. The prophet of Judah returned, and they were seated at the table of the old prophet of Beth-el over their feast of disobedience, and then, by a solemn, by a terrible irony, the seducer was forced to pass a solemn sentence upon his victim. Prophet as he was, he could not resist the Spirit who forced him to speak. 'It came to pass as they sat at the table that the word of the Lord came to the prophet which brought him back, and he cried to the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water, in the place of which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread and drink no water, thy carcase shall not come to the sepulchre of thy fathers.'

What a commentary on those energetic words of the Psalmist, 'He doth ravish the poor when he getteth him into his net. Yes,

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the world does not really, in the long-run, respect the men who obey it. It has a bad conscience at bottom. It knows that it has no right to dictate on questions of Christian duty or Christian truth. In its heart of hearts it despises, it even pities, those who believe it. When all is over it tells them that they were mistaken after all. It dwells with poetic sentiment over the circumstances of their ruin; the carcase cast in the way, the ass standing by it, the lion also standing by the carcase, to illustrate the severity and the reserve of the Divine justice. These things touch its sentiment and its imagination. It drops a tear over the grave of its victim. It would fain be buried near its bones. The poetry and feeling are not duty and action. It is too late, when we have ruined a soul, to unsay the sophism which seduced it, to shed tears over a career which, under other guidance, might have escaped the lion in the way of life.

It may be thought that, considering the old prophet's appeal to an angelic vision, the responsibility of the prophet of Judah was not so great after all; that he was rather sinned against than sinning, that his punishment was out of proportion to his offence, which was that of a too ready credulity rather than of deliberate disobedience. I do not deny that the responsibility for the prophet's act was distributed, that the guilt of the old prophet of Beth-el was as serious as guilt well could be. And if the sterner penalty here was paid by the prophet who disobeyed, and not by the prophet who tempted to disobedience, this is what we see every day of our lives. The victims of false teaching too often suffer, while, so far as this world is concerned, the false teacher escapes, and conscience, witnessing this—witnessing other like mysteries of the divine government, utters its ceaseless, its irrepressible appeal to a hereafter when the strange inequalities of God's awards here shall be perfectly redressed. But the prophet of Judah was guilty. He was guilty as they only can be guilty who have had great graces, clear and strong views of truth and duty, high commissions intrusted to them, and have yielded to some temptation to abuse or degrade their trust. He knew what God had said to him; he knew that God had said it; he knew that God could not contradict Himself. Unless there had been some subtle warp, some secret sympathy in him with what was wrong, he would have rejected the old prophet as he rejected Jeroboam. Age and office have their weight, their grave, their indisputable, weight; but they can never make the true to be false, or the right to be wrong, for any clear, healthy conscience. When age or office abuses its prerogatives, conscience meets them with the words of the Apostle, 'We ought to obey God rather than man.'

The lesson which we learn from this history is, as I said at the beginning, one of the most important that a man can master. It is

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that, however high, however lowly, may be our place in society, or in the Church of Christ, our first duty is fidelity to God's voice in conscience. No eminence of position or accomplishments will atone for the absence of this loyalty. No insignificance in the world's eye can dim its spiritual lustre. The point upon which all turns may seem to outward eyes trivial enough. The apple in Paradise, viewed as an apple, seemed a trivial thing upon which to hang the destiny of a world; but behind some given duty which conscience acknowledges as duty, be it a serious observance of the Lord's day, or regular study of Holy Scripture, or regular reception of the Holy Communion, or the conscientious use of money, or thorough honesty in word or act, or kindly services to relations or to the poor, or some small or needful point of self-denial: behind the single point, whatever it may be, there may lurk nothing less than the whole question of the soul's loyalty to known truth. What can be more petty than the circumstance of eating bread and drinking water at Beth-el, to all appearance? And yet, in reality, everything depended upon it, because it was not the outward transaction, it was the inward principle which that transaction represented, that was really at stake. In reality, the mere circumstance of eating or not eating in a given place constituted nothing less than the frontier between two moral and spiritual states or worlds, between the kingdom of faithfulness to light and grace, and the kingdom of declared disobedience. May God enable us to see things, not simply on the surface, and in the light of human judges, but as they are, to measure them not by a material or social, but by a spiritual and moral standard, to understand that great issues may depend on even insignificant circumstances, and to determine that, if He can achieve it by His grace, we will be true to what He has taught us of truth and duty, cost it us what it may!

H. P. LIDDON.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

The Rejection of Christ.

But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and killed the Prince of Life. . . . And now, brethren, I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. Acts iii. 14, 15, 17.



THE Book of Wisdom was written by some unknown Greek-speaking Jew at a period some time before the writing of the first of the books of our New Testament; and, according to a literary habit of the Jews, put into the mouth of Solomon. It contains, among other things, a description of how the unrighteous world might be supposed to deal with the perfectly righteous man. Insulted by a moral superiority which they cannot gainsay, furious at reproofs which they know to be just, outraged by the claim to know and to be the Son of God, they are described as crying, 'Let us see if His words be true; let us prove what shall befall Him in the latter end; for if the just man be the Son of God, He will help him and deliver Him from the hand of His enemies. Let us examine Him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know His weakness and prove His patience; let us condemn Him to a shameful death.' As we read, in one mood, this powerful description we are inclined to say, 'Surely, after all, it is exaggerated; surely it takes too gloomy a view of the conduct of even the ordinary ungodly world.' But we read it in another mood, and we see that it was in fact verified. It reads to us like little else than an historical account of the way in which men treated the Righteous One, Jesus of Nazareth! We are so accustomed to think of the death of our Lord as it is, our redemption, and as it reveals to us the love of God—we surely cannot think of it too much in that connection; but it ought not to let us forget that there is a prior revelation contained in the Cross. If it reveals the love of God, it reveals first of all the sinfulness of man; it takes off the veil, it discloses with a horrible reality what all over the world human sin is doing. When He, the Righteous One, came into this world of ours with His offer of perfect love, with His claim of perfect justice, this, in historical fact, is how the world treated Him: they examined Him with despitefulness and torture, they put Him to a shameful death.

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I. The Moral Guilt of the Jews. Let us occupy ourselves with that consideration. Of course, there would be some who would not say, Is it legitimate to attribute this to human nature as a whole? Was it not, in fact, the extraordinary sin of certain Jews at a particular period to which we must attribute this unspeakable crime? And the answer is an unhesitating 'No,' if you will consider a little attentively the real moral condition of the situation. There are a great many incidents in our Lord's Passion which strike us with appalled horror, because we know so fully who He was. But after all, that cruel mocking, the purple robe and the crown of thorns, what was this but the rough mockery of Roman soldiers who knew nothing about this particular prisoner who was handed over to them for execution, and who were, alas! in the habit of treating with this rough brutality the prisoners who were delivered over to them? We no doubt translate it into a sort of image of what sin is always doing for the love of God, and we do rightly, but in the historical situation our Lord estimated more rightly their guilt when He cried, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' Look a little further, and you will see that the fact that our Lord was crucified, that is to say, that He died by that particular death, was due to the fact that Judæa had at this time become a province of the Roman Empire, and that this was the death to which in the Roman Empire provincials were condemned.

Look a little further back still, and ask how it was that our Lord came to be condemned to death, and handed over for execution to the Romans. It was because the Jews had no longer the power of life and death, but they had the power of condemnation, and our Lord had made a claim which they saw, if it was not true, was, in fact, blasphemous, and they spoke the truth when they said, 'We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.' Surely, if not a true claim, it was a blasphemous claim, and blasphemy, like all other serious crimes under the old law, was punishable by death. Yes. Run it back to its actual moral condition, and you find yourself face to face with this fact: the moral guilt of the Jews lay in this, and in this only, that they would not receive the moral and spiritual claim which Jesus of Nazareth made upon them, they would not have Him on His own terms. And when you come to think of the different classes of the Jews, and of the moral claim which in fact our Lord made upon them, you will come to feel that the situation was one under which the acceptance of the claim did indeed demand qualities which at least are not common in human life. We shall do well to think about this.

Think first of the Sadducees. The Sadducees were the sacerdotal

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class in power among the Jewish people. Now the Sadducees had the politician's customary view of Jerusalem, that is to say, they resented its intrusion into the region of practical politics, and they were sceptical with the worldly man's scepticism, the scepticism which is anxious to keep religion, the supernatural claim, at arm's-length. Well, then, it was upon a people of this sort, intrusted with a political situation—difficult, no doubt, to manage—that our Lord made His supernatural claim felt with such tremendous force. 'Ye do err,' He said to them, 'ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God. Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the power of God upon the clouds of heaven.' They trembled under that sort of claim; they felt that it would break up the smooth position in which, at least, the political situation was tolerable; they got together, they consulted, 'If this Man be let alone all men will follow Him'; it will become a serious political matter, 'and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.' It was under these circumstances that Caiaphas uttered his memorable suggestion, 'It is better that one man die for the nation, and not that the whole nation perish.'

Or, consider the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the religious class of the nation; they went by the law, the whole law, and nothing but the law; they prided themselves as having escaped so many of those tendencies to lapse into idolatry which had been customary among their forefathers. They had escaped a great number of the denunciations to which the people of the Jews were subjected at the hands of the prophets; they were proud of themselves; they were thorough Jews, they were Israelites indeed, they said, and not only were they proud of themselves, as the religious class of the nation, but the nation as a whole was proud of them too. They were looked up to, they were, in fact, the pious, in the days of the Messiah, they undoubtedly would have the chief place. Now it is a hard thing for a religious class, high in its own esteem and in the esteem of people round about it, to be spoken to, to suffer itself to be spoken to, as Jesus of Nazareth spoke to the Pharisees, for behind all their accuracy of observation He perceived a moral hollowness, and His words fell stern and sharp, 'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you.' Or the common people. They were ready enough to welcome this Benefactor, ready enough to welcome Him, full of good deeds, full of loving-kindness to all who were weak, or disowned, or suffering. 'The common people heard Him gladly.' They came to be healed, they came to be taught; again and again they would have come by force and made Him a king; they surrounded Him on His entrance into Jerusalem; they were there crying with enthusiasm, 'Hosanna

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to the Son of David ! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord ! Hosanna in the highest.' But all this enthusiasm contained very little of moral seriousness, and what Jesus of Nazareth claimed was a large measure of moral seriousness. He would not come down to the level of their aspirations, to want the things that they wanted and to lead them in the matters in which they wanted leading, and therefore their enthusiasm turned into indifference, therefore the 'Hosanna !' passed into the 'Crucify Him ! crucify Him.' So it was Pharisees, Sadducees, and common people gave Him up.

II. The offence of Pilate.

But there was another nation implicated in this rejection of Christ—the nation of Rome, and the Roman people are represented to us by a single individual, and this single individual, Pontius Pilate, affords us an opportunity for pressing this matter home upon our individual consciences, for taking it out of the general into the particular. The situation of Pontius Pilate, the Roman, was of course quite different from the situation of the Jews. He had none of that responsibility which came of the special religious revelation given to the Jews. He knew nothing about the Christ. His situation at Jerusalem at the moment was exactly the situation of a collector or commissioner in the Indian Civil Service who goes up to one of the great centres of native population in India at the time of a religious festival, because then the people congregate there, and there is great likelihood of tumult and religious disorder ; therefore Pontius Pilate was in Jerusalem at the time of the feast. And his situation was in every way remarkable. It was the Roman policy, you know, mixed with scornfulness, no doubt, but consistent, to respect the religious prejudices of the Jews, and Pontius Pilate had, as we know from secular history, three times offended against this religious policy of the Roman Empire—once when he had brought the Imperial standards into Jerusalem with the effigy of the Emperor upon them, and there had been a great outbreak ; once when he had brought some golden shields marked in the same way with the name of some heathen deity ; once when he had taken money out of the sacred treasury, and used it for the construction of an aqueduct. These offences had been reported at Rome, and Pilate had been already reprimanded. It was, in fact, but a few years later that he was summoned to give account of his offences at Rome, when again he had offended against the religious susceptibilities of the Samaritans. This was his position ; there was a Roman policy, and he himself was gravely under suspicion for violating it. And there was not among Roman magistrates any tradition of really personal justice. There were very few Roman magistrates, if any, who would have scrupled to sacrifice an individual to a political exigency. And of course there

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was no halo, such as artists decorate the head of our Lord with, round His head as He stood there, the Galilean Peasant, before Pontius Pilate the Governor. He was called down, that early morning, to the trial of the Galilean prisoner, without any of the solemn preparation which we should like to give when we are summoned to the great crises of our lives, but, as in fact happened, he was called down in the ordinary way of business, just as we are told that some one wants to see us for this or that ordinary transaction. So, unprepared, he went down and found himself confronted with a moral crisis, for he became sure that this Galilean Peasant was innocent, that there was no peril from Him to the Roman Empire; nay, that He was more than innocent; there was something majestic, pathetic, solemn, in that attitude, that Personality, which he could not understand, but which smote upon him; he was sure that it was for envy they had delivered Him, and for no real crime. But, on the other hand, they were set upon having His blood. There was every political exigency on the other side, and you watch with a pathetic interest as Pontius Pilate struggles to evade the moral issue, and finds he cannot, and falters and fails, and again his conscience gives him up, and the great tragedy is enacted.

III. The common worldly world.

It is the common worldly world then which rejects Christ, represented by Jews or represented by Pilate. It is the common worldly world, the world all over. And the strenuous duty which lies on us is to examine ourselves, to look into our own conduct, to see ourselves in the light of God. Things come to look so customary that we forget their real significance. The things looked customary to Jews and Romans; they had not the air which after the reflection of ages we see the facts now to-day invested with; they looked customary and ordinary enough to them. We need to tear off the veil, we need to ask ourselves, What is my relation, even mine, to that call, that difficult call of righteousness, of truth, of meekness, which is Jesus Christ daily on His trial in this world of ours? Are we sure that not the claims of religious convention or political exigency, or the effort to rise to higher moral claim, or the mere pressure of personal interest, are we sure that none of these things are blinding our eyes, and making us deaf and blind to the pure claim of the righteousness of God? If we cannot be sure of this, believe me we are on the side of Pilate, we are on the side of the Jews, we are against Christ, 'He that is not with Me is against Me.'

And on the other hand, look only for a moment at the glory which invests all those, and they are not a few in the history of our nation, who stand conspicuous as men who under no circumstances can we ever conceive capable of playing false to the claim of God. Think of a ruler like John Lawrence in our Indian Empire; you know that

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injustice or corruption could never have got to him under whatever pressure of political exigency. Or think of the business men who have sacrificed themselves—they are not a few, we probably have all known them, even in our own generation and surroundings—who have sacrificed prospects, and chosen to be poorer men because they would not do the dishonest thing. Or think of the churchmen who have stood alone, who have looked behind convention, who have sworn they would be true to truth though they went against popular currents. Or think of the young men who have stood again and again at school or college any amount of solitude or of ridicule rather than tolerate the word or deed of impurity! The point we have got to realise is that it is possible to be on the side of Christ, but not possible without distinct and personal effort.

There are those here who but lately made their vows in confirmation, and were sealed by the unction of the Holy Ghost, that gift of the Holy Ghost which anoints them to the share which every man should bear in the Kingship and Priesthood of Jesus of Nazareth. You are anointed with that holy unction, that you may stand strong, confirmed in the cause of Christ; and what you, what we all must realise is, that you cannot be a Christian as a matter of course, you cannot be a Christian without being ready to stand alone, without being ready to make sacrifices, without being ready to go against custom, without being ready to seek the friendship of Jesus in His sufferings as well as in His consolation.

CANON GORE.

The Pilgrim's Prayer.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more. PSALM xxxix. 12, 13.

THERE are three points in the text calling for notice. There is—

I. The spirit of the prayer.

‘Hear my prayer, O God, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Thy peace at my tears.’

In this prayer we observe a mixture of

1. Faith.

The Psalmist believed that God is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. And therefore he says, ‘Hear my prayer, O Lord.’ He felt that he was not praying to a deaf idol, which has ears but hears not. He felt, too, that he was not praying into the air; but to an unseen yet present God. Alas! too many have no faith in

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prayer. They join in the prayers at church, or they join in the prayers at their family altar, or they go through the ceremony of saying their prayers in private; but there is no exercise of faith in their devotions. They do not really desire that for which they pray. There is no true feeling like that of the Psalmist, 'Hear my prayer, O Lord.' It is a mere cold and formal service.

2. Earnestness.

David not only had faith in his petitions. He not only said, 'Hear my prayer, O Lord.' He mixed earnestness also with his devotions; and therefore he added, 'and give ear unto my cry.' He thus resembled David's son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the days of His flesh, we are told, came before God, not only with prayer, but likewise with 'strong crying.'

We often complain that God does not hear our supplications. But whose is the fault? The fault is not God's. The fault is our own. 'Ye have not,' replies God, 'because ye ask not; or if you do ask, ye ask amiss. Ye ask without faith. Ye ask without earnestness. And therefore God heareth you not.'

3. Contrition.

He not only said, 'Hear my prayer, O Lord; and give ear to my cry'; he also added, 'Hold not Thy peace at my tears.' David knew that he was a sinner, a miserable, gross sinner, and therefore he cried, 'Deliver me from my transgressions. Wash away my offences. Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.' He implored pardon, even with weeping, as he remembered his guilt, and said, 'Hold not Thy peace at my tears.'

Oh that our prayers may be equally acceptable in God's sight. Oh that He may see faith, earnestness, and contrition, even with tears, marking our supplications! and then, through the Saviour's intercession, we shall boldly make David's form of prayer our own form of prayer, and say, with faith, with earnestness, and with contrition, 'Hear my prayer, O Lord; and give ear unto my cry. Hold not Thy peace at my tears.'

We now consider not only the spirit of the prayer, but also

II. Its occasion.

Some writers think the Psalm was written during Absalom's rebellion, when David was compelled to flee from Jerusalem and to go over Jordan as an outcast and a wanderer. He thereupon cried unto God for deliverance, and said, 'I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.' But, whatever was the occasion of the Psalm, the mind of David seems to have been greatly discomposed when he wrote it; and he had a deep impression of the vanity and uncertainty and shortness of human life.

Now this feeling ought to be our feeling also; and that, too, not

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on particular occasions, but at all times. We are in this world only as foreigners in a strange land. We are here as sojourners, like travellers who turn aside to tarry for a night. The same was the case with our fathers before us. They appeared on earth for a little while, possibly for their threescore and ten, or even fourscore years, and they then went from us, and are now no longer seen amongst us. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were David's fathers according to the flesh; and they, we know, wandered from city to city, and confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers.

We should feel that life is short, and that therefore we ought to wait more and more in prayer upon our God. And why need we go to God in prayer? This will be seen from the last verse of our text. You have noticed the spirit of the prayer, and the occasion on which it was offered. Now observe

III. Its object.

The object of the prayer was that David might be in a prepared state before his soul departed into the eternal world. 'O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.' If David imagined that the rebellion of Absalom might prove successful, and end in some way in his own death, he might well ponder the solemnity of that event. To die, even to the Christian, is a momentous thing; and most Christians, if suddenly asked whether they are willing to depart, would inwardly cry, with the Psalmist, 'O spare me a little!' When the message of death was brought to King Hezekiah, he was directed, in the prospect of it, to get his family affairs, as well as his spiritual concerns, ready for that change. 'Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.' And has not this been continually your secret desire whenever the idea of your removal came into your minds. You have a good hope through God's grace; you trust your sins are all pardoned through the blood of the Saviour; you glory in Christ as the Lord your righteousness; and yet, like Hezekiah, you feel you would like time to set your house in order before you go. In your hearts there is a secret misgiving, not as to your own personal salvation, but as to the fit time of your removal; and you wish, as soon as the idea of death crosses your minds, that you may not die yet. There is something in your family that specially demands your continuance in the flesh. Or you feel that of late you have not been so watchful and prayerful as heretofore; and therefore you plead, Spare me this year; spare me for such a period; O spare me a little longer, till my plans are more matured, or till my graces are more quickened!

Let us learn to meditate, and so learn to pray. Meditate on your sins, and you will then pray, as David did, 'Deliver me from all my transgressions.' Meditate on the purifying influences of Christ's

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atonement, and you will then pray, 'Purge me with hyssop,' the hyssop of the Redeemer's blood, 'and I shall be clean; wash me in that purifying fountain, and I shall be whiter than snow.' Meditate on the converting power of the Holy Ghost, and your prayer will then be, 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.' Meditate on the shortness of time, and you will then pray, as David prayed, 'Hold not Thy peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with Thee and a sojourner.'

C. CLAYTON.

The Invitation Refused.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! S. MATTHEW xxiii. 37.

HAVE the hours of life been more in number than the calls in life? I think not. But where are they? Those heavenly whisperings—those angel voices—where are they? Where are the traces! Oh, what might be the nearness to God this day—what might be the peace this day—what might be the holiness this day—what might be the heaven this day with all—if one, if a thousandth part of those calls had been heard, as they might have been; accepted, obeyed, as they might have been! For, mark, it is not for not obeying only, it is for not hearing that we shall have to give account. Multitudes, multitudes are the invitations not heard, and which yet might have been, if the heart had been still enough, and if the affections had been free enough! Oh, you live too much in a world of your own imagination; you live too much in the world's busy din: you live too much in the feverish hum of dissipation and excitement: and so, the beautiful music sounds—but it is lost.

But to show still more the guilt of the rejection, let me just place before you the true background of this picture. Who was it all the while that stood behind and called?

The Father, in tenderest love: 'My son, my son, give Me thy heart.'

A Saviour—a bleeding Saviour—every wound bleeding: 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?'

A glorious Conqueror, descending from His throne of thrones, and suing at your heart, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'

And yet, it is an unquestionable fact—that by some of you—Oh, I trust not all of you; I trust not many of you: God only knows; still, it is an unquestionable fact—that by some of you, all these approaches of God have been, up to this very hour, rejected!

But, since you have not all rejected Him alike, I wish now to point

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out to you some of the different modes in which the rejection of God has been made.

Some there are who will even rise up and say, 'I do not consider that I have ever yet been called.' And these divide themselves into two classes.

Those who wish that they could believe that they had been called, but cannot bring their mind to think that anything so good has happened to them, as that God should so remember and desire them, as that He should call them.

And there are those who virtually complain, 'I do not hold that I have received my call. It is not what God might have done: it is not what God ought to have done if He wished to call me. I wait and expect a further call. Why does not God, if He would indeed save me, make some great interposition on my behalf?'

Alas for the guilty unbelief of the one, and the awful, blasphemous presumption of the other!

But, still more than these: there are those who, conscious that they have been called, nevertheless treat the matter with indifference.

These are your 'men at ease in Zion'; men familiarised with stifled convictions; men of secular habit of mind; men to whom invisible things carry no reality in daily life.

There is your man of business: a man of increasing substance, great in his position, his property, his gold: 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.'

And, then, there is your man engrossed in his round of money-making toil: his worldly duties so pressing as to leave him no space for spiritual concern: 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.: I pray thee have me excused.'

And, then, there is the humble, domestic man, living in his own little circle: his thoughts seldom going beyond his home. Affectionate, but irreligious; his affections strong, but earthward: 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

There are more, again, who recognise the importance of a call, but who put off the acceptance of it. These are minds which Satan decoys by beautiful pictures of their own future. They live in fancies of their own coming holiness. 'At present, indeed, I know it is wrong: but to-morrow's goodness shall well make up for to-day's worldliness.'

But, oh! mark the sin of these. These men think that they can command the sovereign working of the Holy Ghost. They put Him away now, that they may recall Him when they please!

More foolish, more guilty—than if they thought they could chain the free winds of heaven—they dictate to the Holy Ghost His time

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and manner of work. 'Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.'

And yet, again, in this long company who reject their own mercies, there are others—a large class—quick, impressive, sensitive characters, who, at the time, receive, and welcome, and reciprocate, the love of God—but it all dies away like 'water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.' Their religion is a feeling: it never formed itself into a principle. And yet they take credit to themselves for their beautiful impressions. And they are just on the eve, every day, of being happy; but it is always 'I go, sir; I go': yet they go not.

There is a fifth class—the saddest, the guiltiest, the most awful of all. They listen—they draw nigh—they 'taste the heavenly gift'—but the old, carnal nature comes back again, and it prevails. They draw back, and they go out into the distance, and have 'crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame': and they 'judge themselves unworthy of eternal life.'

Now, of all these refusals of God's grace, the real secret is the same. They may cover themselves with various pretexts—just as persons having made up their minds to decline an invitation begin to look out for some convenient excuse—but the cause is one. It is not in any outward circumstances; it is not in any particular temperament; it is not in the want of power; it is not in the straitenings of divine grace: but our Saviour points to it at once with His omniscient mind: 'How often would I have gathered thee—and ye would not.' It is the absence of the will; it is the want of that setting of the mind to God's mind; that conformity of the affections to God's promises: that appreciation of unseen things; that spiritual sense, which is the essence, and the beginning, of a new life. Therefore they cannot come.

And see, oh, see the affecting results! It is a weeping sight.

Here is the music of a voice of love—sweeter than all love—playing around the avenues of men's hearts, and they are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear.

Here are costly gifts—more precious than ten thousand worlds—pressed upon man's acceptance—an eternity with God. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' And men pass by it as a thing of nought, and they go every man to his border.

Here is the most loving and the most lovely being, baring His heart to receive poor sinners back again to His bosom, and they see 'no beauty in Him to desire Him.'

Here is the voice by the crowded wayside of this crowded life

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crying ever, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

But, all the while, men—poor, sinking men—will carry on their burden still, and will hug their sins still, till they faint, and lie down, and die.

Oh, what a spectacle before high heaven! What a marvel to the eyes of holy angels, to hear Him calling to such worms of earth, and they refuse.

And what will be the end of it? What will be the end of it?

Ask Jerusalem—ask Jerusalem. The end will be—the most accurate retribution that the world ever saw.

Now, He is the Caller, and we the called: then, we shall be the callers, and He the Called.

But, as now, so then, both refuse!

'Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.'

I see a closed door, and at that door a crowd; and they are crying out, each man with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But His voice, within that closed door, makes only the answer, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you.'

I see a vast assembly. 'The kings of the earth are there, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman;' and there is a wail among that crowd; they call upon the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?' But the rocks and the mountains hear them not!

Oh, thanks be to His grace, it is still God's sweet gathering time. 'As the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,' so is the Son of Man gone forth to gather you. By many a loud note of promise, by many a preached word, by many a gracious overture, by many a 'still small voice,' He is gathering in you.

Hark, hark, the shades of evening are falling fast, the bird of prey is in the air, and there is no refuge, there is no peace, there is no safety for God's little ones, but underneath those shadowing wings!

JAMES VAUGHAN.

ILLUSTRATIONS

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

Two Characters. 1. TAKE an ordinary man of the world. What he thinks and what he does, his whole standard of duty, is taken from the society in which he lives. It is a borrowed standard: he is as good as other people are; he does, in the way of duty, what is generally considered proper and becoming among those with whom his lot is thrown. He reflects established opinion on such points. He follows its lead. His aims and objects in life, again, are taken from the world around him, and from its dictation. What it considers honourable, worth having, advantageous, and good, he thinks so too, and pursues it. His motives all come from a visible quarter. It would be absurd to say that there is any mystery in such a character as this, because it is formed from a known external influence—the influence of social opinion and the voice of the world. ‘Whence such a character cometh,’ we see; we venture to say that the source and origin of it is open and palpable, and we know it just as we know the physical causes of many common facts.

2. There is a certain character and disposition of mind of which it is true to say that ‘thou canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth.’ . . . There are those who stand out from amidst the crowd, which reflects merely the atmosphere of feeling and standard of society around it, with an impress upon them which bespeaks a heavenly birth. . . . Now, when we see one of those characters, it is a question which we ask ourselves, How has the person become possessed of it? Has he caught it from society around him? That cannot be, because it is wholly different from that of the world around him. Has he caught it from the inoculation of crowds and masses, as the mere religious zealot catches his character? That cannot be either, for the type is altogether different from that which masses of men, under enthusiastic impulses, exhibit. There is nothing gregarious in this character; it is the individual’s own; it is not borrowed, it is not a reflection of any fashion or tone of the world outside; it rises up from some fount within, and it is a creation of which the text says, We know not whence it cometh.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

Scriptures Proper to the Day.

EPISTLE, 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 1-11.
GOSPEL, S. LUKE XVIII. 9-14.
FIRST MORNING LESSON, . 1 KINGS XVIII.
FIRST EVENING LESSON, . 1 KINGS XIX. OR 1 KINGS XXI.
SECOND LESSONS, ORDINARY.

I. COMPLETE SERMON

The Still Small Voice.

And after the earthquake, a fire: but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. 1 KINGS xix. 12.



HERE is a thing deeply to be deprecated, that God should visit a man so—should actually speak to the man—and that that man should not be aware that he was in communication with God.

I wish to try to provide against such a calamity. I wish so to consider what God's voice is, that, if it be possible, He may never speak to any one of us without our knowing it.

The very expression that His voice is still and small, will lead us to see, that there is a great danger that we may miss it.

Conceive yourself, on some dark wintry night, upon a stormy sea, your barque among rocks; and that one single voice from the shore can alone tell you how to escape; and that that voice is still and small; and that it sounds but at intervals.

How you would listen to that voice! How, amidst the roar of

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the elements, you would draw in your breath, to catch the welcome sound ! With what an expectation would your mind listen for the note, as it fell again and again on the breeze !

And is there no peril in this world, lest we lose, amidst our swelling passions, the gentle voice which speaks to us from heaven—till our soul draws on unto destruction ?

The fact is, most of us make a mistake, as to the way in which we expect God to speak to us.

We look to find it in something great and magnificent. We should all like to be spoken to in that way. We should all like to be spoken to by a prodigy.

But the Lord does not often do that. He is too great to do that. It belongs to everything which is really great, that it acts simply. The infinite God does all His works in the simplest manner possible. And the Lord does everything in a way to show His own power. If the machinery were great, the mover might be little. The earthquake is greater than the voice. But God is greater, when He does a thing by His voice—still and small—than when He does it by an earthquake. Therefore God does not do it by an earthquake ; but does it by the still small voice.

We have all sometimes been present, when a preacher, in the midst of his congregation, pours out his torrents of fervid eloquence, till every feeling trembles with emotion, and every soul is on fire with the sympathy of his burning thoughts.

And it is very natural for some one who enters that church to think, 'What an embassy from heaven is here ! What conversions there will be in this church !'

Yet, perhaps, all the while, God is not there. The hallowed mind, the prayerful frame, the Spirit, they are all absent there. There has been the wind, but 'the Lord was not in the wind ;' there was the earthquake, but 'the Lord was not in the earthquake ;' there was the fire, but 'the Lord was not in the fire.' The still small voice did not speak : and souls go away admiring, excited, agitated ; but there has been no intercourse with heaven !

How often, again, in the midst of the sublimities of nature, a spectator, gazing from some high mountain range, has been fain to cry out, 'What an aid to devotion ! what a ladder up to heaven !' Who has not exclaimed, when the thunder-cloud has rolled its awful peal, 'Surely this is the voice of God !'

And yet it is to be questioned, whether ever one soul of man was drawn to God by the contemplation of the glory of creation : or, whether ever one man received, indeed, his call to grace in the summons of the storm.

Men have lived their threescore years and ten—in all the frequency

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of nature's most eloquent works, and from the cradle to the grave, they have not found God, for He is not in the wind; and He is not in the earthquake; and He is not in the fire; but He is in the still small voice.

Or, it may happen thus. Some great and overwhelming catastrophe has occurred, some judgment has broken over our heads, the sudden stroke of death, has made its awful appeal; and one, with whom we have been long familiar, has been hurried in a moment to his grave: and the wisdom of man begins to argue: 'Surely now there will be a revival! The Lord will be recognised here. Surely in so loud a sign, hearts that never prayed before, will hear their Maker's bidding, and will lift up to Him a repentant cry!'

While we look for it, the solemn event passes by, and it is all forgotten. The still small voice has not been heard. The wind, and the earthquake, and the fire, have been only like a pageant when it is past.

We must be very careful to put things in their right proportion; and not to disparage any of God's dealings.

It very often pleases God to make use of external displays of His power, to make way for the working of His grace; only, I say, He is jealous to show that these external circumstances are never themselves the grace.

Let us not despise them. The most earnest sermon that was ever preached cannot convert; but, if God pleases, it can awaken the slumbering feelings in a man's heart.

The grandeur of the most awful scenery can never declare the gospel to the beholder; but may humble him into a deep sense of his own insignificance. . . .

We would not under-rate the wild prelude that ushers in the harmony. God delights to write out His love in the background of His terrors.

Only men are wont to trace back the work of grace in their own, or other's hearts, to external circumstances.

We speak of men being 'converted by a sermon.' We speak of men being 'changed by affliction.' Yet the sermon, or affliction, was no more than the external scaffolding. It was not they who brought the soul to God. They, perhaps, led a man to think. They sent him to his Bible. They drove him to his knees. There the little still small voice, the invisible monitor, the Holy Spirit's inward influences—that did the work.

Without that, nothing else ever sent a soul to Christ! Without that, all is as silent as the winds of yesterday!

Oh, let me ask you, how often has the chill blast of affliction

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blown upon you? how often has the earthquake shaken the roots of life, with you? how often has a hot fire been kindled about you? But, where is the still small voice? Has it been heard in the inner chambers of your soul?

But let us leave this. Let us turn to look at the matter on a larger field of thought.

When God first created man, He drew the creature, which He had formed, to Himself, with the most winning forms of love.

In a beautiful paradise, His voice talked with man in the stillness of the evening hour. Need I say how that voice grew silent?

Then God proclaimed Himself in the wind, in the earthquake, and in the fire.

The deluge swept in its fury. The earth trembled at its Creator's descent. Sinai glared with His lightnings. The law came in all its terror. Every display of the Almighty set forth the offended holiness of His dreadful majesty. Judgment rolled over judgment; but God, in all His attributes, was still an unknown God, on His own earth.

Then it was that, gently, and wellnigh unnoticed by the world—in a scene so poor, and a form so mean, that man regarded it not—the Eternal Word, the still small voice of God, came to Bethlehem; in the very midst of the fire of the Father's vengeance, He came. He came to tell what the law could never tell—a just God of love—that God was not in the wind; and that God was not in the earthquake; and that God was not in the fire; but that God was only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And was not Jesus God's still small voice, when, in His human garb, He walked the plains of Galilee, and declared His Father's glory, and His Father's will? The bruised reed He never broke; the smoking flax He never quenched. He did not strive, nor lift up His voice in the street.

Despised in His littleness, that voice was, nevertheless, the great power of Jehovah. and, calm as were those loving lips, they uttered the mandates that all worlds obeyed.

Evil spirits cowered at His presence: sickness, and sorrow, and death, fled before Him, where He went.

Against the dark background of the penal law, He declared the gospel's peace.

And when, on the mount of Beatitudes, that voice, long silent, began, in its own gentleness, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'—Sinai's trumpet grew silent! And when He stood, and called so lovingly, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest'—who remembered, then, any more, the blackness, and the darkness, and the

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tempest? And when, at last, those dying lips spoke those words of Godhead, 'It is finished!' did not every adoring angel, as he stooped to the sound, confess, that all the displays that had been made of God, in His own universe, in magnificence, were as nought, to that one still small voice of Calvary?

And, then, there came another day. The Church was collected together, and its number was one hundred and twenty; when, suddenly, the house shook where they were assembled, and the fire gleamed, and the flames sat upon the head of every one of them—that the fire, and the earthquake, and the wind, and the still small voice might meet together to honour the Spirit's work.

Oh! was it the trembling house that wrought conviction there? Was it the forked flame that lighted up every head? Was not it the sacred influence of the Holy Spirit that lighted every man's soul, so that, with new language, and new tongues, men proclaimed the wonders of God's grace?

But we have rather to do with what is the voice of God, as it now speaks to the souls of men.

We must be very jealously careful that we do not dare to legislate for the Spirit.

But we lay it down, that the voice of God must be like something very still and small.

You are to expect it, therefore, within you; and that, not in any very broad, and striking, and decisive manifestation, but like a whisper, a very fine little thread in a man's breast. It can speak, alike, in all places, at all times. You can never be sure that you are not going to be spoken to by God. You can never be sure that you are not actually hearing His voice: for, whenever the question arises in your mind, 'Is God speaking to me?'—you may be perfectly sure, by that sign, that the still small voice is at work.

But, at first, a man can scarcely believe that what is within him is God's voice. It is so exceedingly still, so perfectly calm and quiet. I do not say it is always so. Some are called in the hurricane; some are called in the fire; but, for the most part, it is, as when Elijah heard it, very still, and very small.

There is a slight drawing that you feel here; there is another little drawing you feel there. Yesterday, you felt it; and it is repeated again to-day. Something that simply said to you, 'That is wrong!' Something that whispered in your ear, 'That will come up in judgment!' Or, something rose up in your mind, that seemed to say to you, 'I must go to Christ; I must make a change; I must give up my present way of life. I will go and read my Bible.' Or, there is a whisper, 'Jesus is quite ready to receive you. God is waiting for you. Go, and be His child. He is calling you.'

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Oh, that voice may be still and small; but, if God will, you shall hear it, as though it thundered.

It is not the loudest notes that always go the deepest, or dwell the longest. They say, a sigh lingers the longest in the deserts of Africa. God's voice will be heard in a man's conscience, with tremendous power, if God determines to make it powerful; and a man cannot resist it. You may fly over seas; but you will hear it there. You may rush into riot; but you will hear it there. It is omnipresent and omnipotent. It is the same still small voice.

A man is listening to a sermon—hearing it like a tale—suddenly, something comes across him, and says, 'That is me.' That is 'God's still small voice.'

A man is in affliction. He hears it, as if somebody said in his ear, 'There is rest for you in Christ.' That is God's still small voice.

A man lies on his bed at night. he thinks suddenly, 'Oh, what a sin I committed during the day. I must down upon my knees, and ask God to forgive me.' That is God's still small voice.

A man is not well. It strikes him suddenly, 'I think I shall die soon—what will become of my soul? Am I prepared to meet God?' That is God's still small voice.

A man rushes into a scene of gaiety and dissipation, and hears the words, 'What doest thou here?' That is God's still small voice.

A man has a relation, and it occurs to him, 'Have I ever spoken to that man about his soul?' That is God's still small voice.

A man is under burden of sin. Suddenly his memory awakes, and he hears, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin.' That is God's still small voice.

A man is dying; although he does not see any one standing by him, a voice says to him, 'Fear not, I am with thee.' That is God's still small voice.

If God speaks to men like this, in what an attitude ought that man to be who wishes to hear it? Is not it everything? Such a voice is not very likely to be heard in the din and noise of life. Are not secret places, tranquil hours, those where such visits might be expected? Must not a man who would hear God be still in his closet—much in prayer—often alone—a quiet man?

It is a very little thing if a man resists a sermon; but if there be any man to whom the still small voice has been really speaking—and he resists that?

Do you know, that that very voice, which has been remonstrating so gently with you, is the same that, one day, is to pronounce your eternal sentence? When that voice sounds from the judgment-seat, so awfully, and the heavens shall melt away before it, how will you

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bemoan that you had not trifled with it—when so still, and calm, and quiet, the other side of the grave!

When Elijah heard that still small voice, ‘he wrapped his face in his mantle’—confession of sin—‘and went out, and stood in the entering-in of the cave’—a position of expectation.

I would it were so with those hearing me! I would that some of you, in whom the deep voice of conviction has been working so much of late, would go and cover your face for very sin! would cast yourself on your knees, and wait, till God should speak to you, from the mercy-seat!

You would not wait long. He would soon make His glory to pass by before you; and show you a token of His love. The still small voice would begin to fall very sweetly on your ear, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.’

But, if not, remember, you may hide yourselves now in the strongholds of sin, you may love to haunt the dark caves of ignorance, but the hour is coming, when the hurricane and the voice will meet you again. The hurricane, that shall disrobe the world; and the voice, ‘the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never can be quenched.’

JAMES VAUGHAN.

The Pharisee.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. S. LUKE xviii. 10.

THE Pharisee was in his day the representative of the covenanted people. That is what made his case so serious—that he was the religious core of the race, its official organ. He was the spiritual eye with which Israel was to see its Messiah. In him Israel was to be tested as a people. According to his success or failure would it be determined whether the Son of Man in coming to His own should be recognised and received by His own or no. That is the tragedy of the gospel story. That is why our Lord’s disappointment at the Pharisee is so anxious and so bitter. They were His point of contact with the people as a whole, just because they were the guardians and preservers of that prophetic tradition which clung to the reality of Israel’s unique mission and to the hope of a Messianic rescue. The Scribes and Pharisees did sit in Moses’s seat. Our Lord does not dispute this. They were the living exponents of loyalty to the Mosaic law. So entirely did He acknowledge this that we know He adopted much of their method and habit. He presented Himself to the people in the character of a Rabbi, and that was His favourite name among

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His friends; the name by which Judas would salute Him when he would come before Him as His intimate friend, 'Master, Master,' and kiss Him; the name by which the Magdalene saluted Him on the Resurrection morning, 'Rabboni.' He moved about with His band of pupils, disciples, His children, the circle who sat at His feet as Paul at Gamaliel's, and who should become good scribes, instructed in bringing out of their treasures things new and old. He prepared them to bind and to loose, to give ethical judgments, to direct the discipline of the law, and He loved the parable, the enigmatical character of the story so characteristic of Rabbinical teaching; He was to be found in the synagogue, and He took His normal place there as an interpreter of Scripture; He adopted prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and, more than all, He made His own and sanctioned that peculiar body of doctrine which it was the work of the Pharisee to assert in his schools, that teaching which they had developed since the closing of the Canon as to angels and spirits, as to the judgment to come, as to the resurrection of the dead. This all became the very heart of our gospel, and our Lord unhesitatingly declared the Pharisees right in this, and the Sadducees wholly wrong. Therefore it is that S. Paul is perfectly honest when he proclaims himself in the midst of the hostile Jewish assembly to be still a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. It is no mere catch phrase used to divide his foes; it is perfectly true; he is but obeying his genuine Pharisaic leading when he believes in the resurrection of the dead. It is his old creed learned under Gamaliel, which he claims is verified in the raising of the dead. 'It is concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead that I am called in question.' The Pharisee was the heir of the covenant.

And the publican—what of him? In all this he had utterly and miserably failed. So far as he went, as his influence acted, God's covenant would have utterly lapsed; the chosen people would be blended and fused and lost in the vague host of hopeless Gentiles, the prophetic hope of the Messiah would have died away into forlorn forgetfulness. For him the prophets have spoken in vain. He cherished nothing as a trust on the world's behalf; he had compromised, he had betrayed the cause, he had even paraded his disloyalty, for he had worn the livery of the conquering Roman; he made his own private gain out of his country's shame; he farmed for himself the very revenues which were the signal of her fall. So contemptible, so mercenary was his treachery, and our Lord never disguises His condemnation of the publican's career: He classes it with harlotry.

And how, then, can we even picture the indignation and the scorn of the Pharisee at such a renegade, as he caught sight of him praying in the very temple which he so dishonoured? We, perhaps, know

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how a clergyman, who is a fervent total abstainer, burning with a sense of the fatality of drink, feels towards the odour of the reeking gin-palace which spreads its ruin through his parish. Can he believe in any moral goodness being at work in the man who profits by so vile a trade? Or we can think how difficult it is for a Nationalist in Ireland to give any credit at all to the motives of a man who seems to him to betray his own people in their misfortunes by land-grabbing; and the Pharisee must have seemed to himself to be justified in adding to all such scorn as this the righteous condemnation of God's judgment on a treacherous Israelite who had broken his word. So we can imagine a little, perhaps, of the horror and contempt: 'Thank God I am not like that; not an extortioner, not an adulterer; and, thank God, not like that publican there.' So the Pharisee stood praying in the house of his God, that house to whose honour he deemed himself so faithful.

So after his prayer he passed down to his house. We can see him—the complacent assurance on his face, in his gait, in the very folds of his garment with broad fringes; how absolutely convinced of his rightness; how tough and squarely strong he moves along there among the unclean Gentiles, holding aloof, lifting his skirts. He has the look of a man who has a position to dignify, an attitude to sustain. Wherever he entered he would be offered the chief seat, and he knows it, and he likes it, and he wears the look of the scientific expert, too, who knows so much more than others of the true mind of God. He has the entry there, he has unlocked the secrets, he is in possession. The crowd who do not know the rules and traditions, they must be accursed; they are daily defiling themselves in the Gentile crowd, either through ignorance or negligence; but he knows exactly what ought to be done and what not, and he can account for everything he does, can give you chapter and verse, and a definite opinion to justify him. In eye, in voice, in gesture, we read the confident complacency of the self-occupied, self-approving man, who could so easily put the whole world straight if only it would let him, the man who never loses the consciousness of the 'Thank God I am not as other men are.' He goes down to his house, sketched, as we know, for us with such brilliant irony by one who knew him well, sketched there as the man who boasted that he is a Jew and rests upon the law, and glories in God and knows the divine will, and can precisely discern the things that are excellent, instructed as he is out of his law, and is quite confident that he is meant to be a guide for the blind, a light for them that sit in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of those who are to him as mere babes. So he looks to us as we watch him home.

I. Something is wrong. What is it? We can learn well enough,

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for we can go behind that hard, outward shell of the man, we can read in the secret places of his heart ; for one who once was even as he has told us what is behind that screen. Something was at work, he tells us, which terribly belied that confident, self-sufficient exterior. What was it ? What does this Pharisee who has unbosomed himself to us, tell us of it ? What did he find ? Did he find that the law to which he had adhered bred in him that smooth, self-reliant approval ? Was there not another voice with which it spake ? Lo, lo ! down within the inner man a voice of reproof, of conviction. This law up to which he pressed as into the embrace of God, had in it the sharpness of a sword dividing joints and marrow. True, it was in itself just and good and holy ; true, that in the inward will he, the man, the Pharisee, could himself delight and approve of it, and welcome it, and find it a joy ; but then the very will that was rejoiced—had it not a strange, uncomfortable impotence ? The will rejoiced indeed, but the man could not do what he willed ; nay, the man did that which he willed not, that which he abhorred. The will was there to do, approving the law, responding to the law, but the man himself was a prisoner in other hands, swept away by that which he would not, a slave to that carnal desire which he and the law condemned. That was what happened, and the nearer he pressed to the law the more obvious and painful became this dualism. S. Paul, who tells us all this, may possibly be using the full law of the gospel to read out what had gone on in him as a Pharisee ; he may be giving it a clearer outline, a more emphatic significance than would have been possible to him in the old days before he believed ; but the struggle still was there in him—the split that had shown itself then. The law itself had found out a sin that was far from being as honey in the mouth ; it had a bitter taste. All this was there. The sense of impotence was growing more and more horrible, and so Paul the Pharisee tells us that it was what was going on within him. But if that dark secret was suspected in the innermost recesses of the man, what of that outward Pharisaic complacency, that smooth self-assurance ? There could be but one explanation. The Pharisee was stifling that conscience within him, was silencing the law in his heart. That sense of dislocation was there, S. Paul assures us. It was the immediate result of the law itself. It was through the law that he became conscious of it. The law worked in him the knowledge of sin. Ever he heard there that unspoken whisper : ‘Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself ? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery ? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal ? Thou who gloriest in the law, dishonourest thou God ?’ That was the dreadful penetrating whisper which he, the Pharisee of Pharisees, carried about with him.

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II. And others must have known the whisper even as he. All who were true to themselves knew it, and yet their public life was wholly to belie it, to conceal it; and those who knew it not must have been false either to themselves or to the law; they must have kept it under, have smothered it, have hushed up its hidden cry; they must have deceived themselves; otherwise, if they had been honest, there would have been in their faces, in their eyes, not that hard, un pitying self-assurance, but a scared look of fear, of humiliating anxiety; the sense of a miserable disclosure of weakness; the look of a wounded animal, plaintive, sympathetic, appealing; the anguish of voice ever breaking out into, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?' This there must have been, and in hushing this all up, in choking this self-revelation, they were what our Lord called them—hypocrites, self-deceivers. Hypocrites—and how serious the sin, for it is self-deceit within a spiritual mind itself. It was in the very motions with which they sought and served God that their hypocrisy lay—not in the lower man, but in the very highest—falsehood secreted within the very heart and the innermost intention with which they gave themselves up to the divine law. They deceived themselves into thinking they were loyal to God just in that very point in which they were disloyal to the law that ought to have convicted them of sin.

And such a sin has a peculiar terror about it, that it is, if left alone, past cure. For cure must depend on the power to recognise the need of cure, and this recognition can only come from a conscience that stands above the sin and condemns it by a higher standard. But what then if the higher standard be itself just that which has not arrived? What if it be the conscience itself which is disturbed? There is no criterion left by which to test and to detect wrong. We reach the truth of Plato's old paradox, that it is worse to do wrong without knowing it than knowing it. In the deepest sense that must be true. So long as the wrong is known to be wrong the man's moral insight is unperturbed, his judgment is sane, sound, and uncorrupt; at any moment recovery may be open to him, for he has still the spiritual eye to see that the law is just and good and holy, even though he be led captive by a carnal self. But the man who does wrong thinking it to be right gives evidence of a far more radical evil, he shows that the spiritual eye is blind, and our Lord has warned us how great is that darkness; his moral judgment is itself in a diseased condition; his innermost heart is corrupt; he has no inner self now that he can disentangle from the guilt, and say, 'It is not I that sinned, but sin that sinneth in me,' and therefore left to himself he is shut off from the possibilities of repentance, for there is no standard in him to which any preacher can make appeal. The open sinner, the publican, the man who surrenders himself to a law

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of God is spared this deeper moral peril. He does not use his conscience, and therefore he is not saved from the danger of opposing it. He knows that he is wrong; he does not mistake wrong for right. The publicans cannot entirely despise themselves for what they did as much as the Pharisees did. Their inner voice may at any moment be roused, be considered, be obeyed. The way of recovery is open. But the Pharisee, what can be done for him? The inner voice was already obeyed, only it gave no true and honest utterance. It was this inner voice itself which was at fault. It ought to be sending up the cry, 'O wretched man that I am!' and, instead, it is ever repeating, 'Thank God I am not as other men are!'

No wonder that our Lord was profoundly sensitive to the perils of the position; no wonder that ever and again He thundered out loud tones of warning, rebuke, and alarm. Other sins were simple to deal with, but here was a moral condition which called out all His resources; He spent Himself therefore, He risked His life in efforts to pluck the veil away from those blind eyes, to shame them into some suspicion of their sins; and surely not in vain, for in the Acts we read how many of those same Pharisees upon whom He poured out His denunciations did become obedient, did learn to join the company of publicans and harlots who had gone in before them. But still, though they personally found their entry, they had failed as representatives of the people to recognise the Messiah who had come to His own. They, the true heirs, were the last to receive Him, and Jerusalem has therefore never known the day of its visitation, and the house of which those Pharisees were the official guardians was left unto them desolate. They could not see Him, and we know why, just because of their own particular and peculiar sin. They saw no need for their own deliverance from any captivity. If only they had been listening to that which S. Paul knew so well, that anguish which was ready ever to break out in the cry, 'Who shall deliver me?' then they would have known the Messiah, the very sense of need would have given them eyes to see and ears to hear. So our Lord told them when they asked by what authority He did these things. We know how He challenged them with the baptism of John, that embodied a confession of impotent repentance, yet a repentance that found no adequateness in its own confession—a repentance that still, therefore, in its abasement, confessed its own failure to remove sin, and looked out for another—for Him who should come with the availing baptism, the baptism of fire, for one who should indeed be to them as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Why did the Pharisee not understand that message of the Baptist? Was it only for the sinner, and not for the earnest and the devout? Yet those who came nearest to the

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Lord and closest to God ought to have known more, and not less, of the captivity of sin, for it was the law which gave them the knowledge of sin. Why did they not receive with their knowledge, through their devotion to the law, the baptism of John? That was the primary question which determined by what authority Jesus stood purging in His own temple. The baptism of John was the test which proved the self-deceit of the Pharisee. The publicans and harlots at least had known what the Baptist meant, and, so knowing, they saw the Lamb of God which would take away their sin. They, the blind, saw; the Pharisees who saw were proved blind. 'I am come that they who see not may see, and that they who see may be made blind.'

III. We, too, are Pharisees; we fall under the woe of the Pharisees, whenever our advance, if such it be, in religious life, ceases to increase and intensify our sense of penitence. It is the same now as with them in this matter. If we are loyal to the service of God, if we are indeed committed to the way of Christ, this must always mean that we see deeper and deeper into the dread mystery of our own sin, and are filled with ever profounder shame at the sight that there we see. This must be so by the very law of holiness, for holiness in man is simply the natural outcome of the forces of grace within us. It means that the powers thrown into our beings by God's creative and recreative breath, and issuing from us in their normal shape, put out their proper missions, find unhindered freedom of action, so that even if man's holiness were perfect he could no more think of praising himself for it, or flattering himself for it, than he can do so for taking his breath in the right way. He would but joyfully recognise in himself the free passage of God's out-pourings, and would give thanks that he was so fearfully and wonderfully made. That, if his holiness were perfect; but what irony in the very supposition! What we presume to call our holiness is but a broken shadow of this which might have been. It is but the slow, painful, fragmentary, disappointing recovery of some faint suggestion of all that God would have done if we had not hindered and denied Him. Such broken gleams of goodness as appear in us, do but serve to open our eyes to the vision of what we have lost. We had not even dreamed of the close Fatherhood of God and all that He was longing to pour out upon us; and if now by some possible effort of obedience we just begin to understand it, we gain at last some slight estimate of the burden, the weary weight of sin with which we have hitherto held down the mercy of God and forbidden it to save us. Oh, if the response were so great, so graciously given to our pitiful and tardy efforts, what would He not have done if we could have given Him a whole heart and a sound service; what promises were waiting! what

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honey out of a stony rock, and the uttermost parts of the heathen for our possession, if only we had hearkened! Without some touch of holiness we cannot even guess at all this that has been held back. We must have drunk some drop from His cup even to know this state of things. We can never sufficiently know, and, therefore, never sufficiently sorrow for our sins, and our advances in sanctity are just enough to reveal the fulness with which Christ is all in all. Woe! The tears, the shame, the humiliation, with which we recognise all that the bad years have now made impossible. Too late, too late we learn to do more now than offer to Jesus the broken fragments of wasted hours which He is patient enough to gather in, with the contrite and broken heart, which even now He will not despise. Something He will even yet of His pity do with us, but how poor and profitless the years that have brought Him nothing but the wreckage, the waifs and strays, of all the fair hopes with which our lives were bound. For those who serve Christ with any loyalty at all, self-satisfaction, self-applause, self-complacency, become the one absolute impossibility, and praise from other men for their goodness would be to such a sharp and poignant distress, against which they would produce a real agony. Pharisaism is impossible to us if we are honest to Christ. The two are so utterly incompatible they cannot co-exist.

Therefore in our management of our souls, as we are led by God's grace to give more care and pains to ourselves, let us be quickly suspicious of anything that seems to us like a spiritual advance if we do not find it tends also to deepen our spirit of penitence. Not that the religious life will be joyless or morose. No, but the thrilling joys that break out upon us as the strong force of God, the blessed Father, is felt once again stirring and alive within us, will themselves be to us the manifestation of all that we have done and still are doing to disappoint so gracious a Father, and to degrade so wonderful a love.

CANON SCOTT HOLLAND.

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II. OUTLINE ON THE EPISTLE

The Primary Truths.

I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures: and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures. I CORINTHIANS XV. 3, 4.



THE starting-point of the whole argument of this chapter will be found in the two verses which form our text. The Apostle opens by reminding the Corinthians that 'among the first things' which he delivered to them, when he commenced his teaching, were two great facts about Christ: one was His death, the other was His resurrection. The passage seems to me to open up two subjects of deep interest, and to them I shall invite your attention to-day.

I. For one thing, let us mark well the primary truths which S. Paul delivered to the Corinthians.

II. For another thing let us try to grasp the reasons why S. Paul assigns to these truths such a singularly prominent position.

I. What then were the things which the Apostle preached first of all (*ἐν πρώτοις*) at Corinth?

Before I answer that question I ask you to pause a while and realise the whole position which S. Paul occupied when he left Athens and entered Corinth.

Here is a solitary Jew visiting a great heathen city for the first time, to preach an entirely new religion, to begin an aggressive evangelistic mission. He is a member of a despised people, sneered at alike by Greeks and Romans, isolated and cut off from other nations, in their own little corner of the earth, by their peculiar laws and habits, and unknown to Gentiles either for literature, arms, arts, or science. The bodily presence of this bold Jew is weak, and his speech, compared to that of Greek rhetoricians, contemptible. He stands almost alone in a city, famous all over the world, even in the estimate of the heathen, for luxury, immorality, and idolatry—*Non cuivis homini, contingit adire Corinthum!* Such was the place and such was the man! A more remarkable conjuncture it is hard to conceive.

And what did this solitary Jew tell the Corinthians? What did he say about the great Head and Founder of the new faith which he wanted them to receive in place of their ancient religion? Did he begin by cautiously telling them how Christ lived, and taught, and

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worked miracles, and spake as no man ever spake? Did he tell them that He had been rich as Solomon, victorious as Joshua, or learned as Moses? Nothing of the kind! The very first fact he proclaimed about Christ was that He died, and died the most ignominious death—the death of a malefactor, the death of the cross.

And why did S. Paul lay so much stress upon Christ's death rather than His life? Because, he tells the Corinthians, 'He died for our sins.' A deep and wonderful truth that, a truth which lay at the very foundation of the whole religion which the Apostle came to preach! For that death of Christ was not the involuntary death of a martyr, or a mere example of self-sacrifice. It was the voluntary death of a Divine Substitute for the guilty children of Adam, and by it He made atonement for the sin of the world. It was a death of such mighty influence on the position of sinful man before God, that it provided complete redemption from the consequences of the Fall. In a word, he told the Corinthians that when Christ died He died as the representative of guilty man, to make expiation for us by the sacrifice of Himself, and to endure the penalty which we deserved. 'He bore our sins in His own Body on the tree.' 'He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.' 'He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' A great and stupendous mystery, no doubt! But a mystery to which every sacrifice from the time of Abel had been continually pointing for four thousand years. Christ died 'according to the Scriptures.'

The other great fact about Christ which S. Paul placed in the front part of his teaching, was His resurrection from the dead. He boldly told the Corinthians that the same Jesus who died, and was buried, came forth alive from the grave on the third day, and was seen, touched, handled, and talked to, in the body, by many competent witnesses. By this amazing miracle He proved, as He had frequently said He would, that He was the promised and long-expected Saviour foretold in prophecy, that the satisfaction for sin He had made by His death was accepted by God the Father, that the work of our redemption was completed, and that death, as well as sin, was a conquered enemy. In short, the Apostle taught that the greatest of miracles had been wrought, and that with such a Founder of the new faith he came to proclaim, first dying for our sins, and then rising again for our justification, nothing was impossible, and nothing wanting for the salvation of man's soul.

Such were the two great truths to which S. Paul assigned the first place, when he began his campaign as a Christian teacher at Corinth: Christ's vicarious death for our sins: Christ's rising again from the grave. Nothing seems to have preceded them: nothing to have

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been placed on a level with them. No doubt it was a sore trial of faith and courage to a learned and highly-educated man like S. Paul to take up such a line. Flesh and blood might well shrink from it. He says himself, 'I was with you in weakness and fear, and in much trembling.' But by the grace of God he did not flinch. He says, 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'

Nor did the case of Corinth stand alone. Wherever the great Apostle of the Gentiles went he preached the same doctrine, and in the same place and proportion. He addressed very different hearers, and people of very different minds. But he always used the same spiritual medicine, whether at Jerusalem or Pisidia, Antioch, or Iconium, or Lystra, or Philippi, or Thessalonica, or Berea, or Athens, or Ephesus, or Rome. That medicine was the story of the Cross and the Resurrection. They crop up in all his sermons and Epistles. You never go far without coming across them. Even Festus, the Roman governor, when he tells Agrippa of Paul's case, describes it as hingeing on 'one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.'

1. Now let us learn for one thing what were the leading principles of that religion, which eighteen centuries ago came forth from Palestine, and turned the world upside down. The veriest infidel cannot deny the effect that it produced on mankind. The world before and the world after the introduction of Christianity were as different worlds as light from darkness, night and day. It was Christianity that starved idolatry, and emptied the heathen temples; that stopped gladiatorial combats, elevated the position of women, raised the whole tone of morality, and improved the condition of children and the poor. These are facts which we may safely challenge all the enemies of revealed religion to gainsay. They are facts which form one of the gravest difficulties of infidelity. And what did it all? Not, as some dare to say, the mere publication of a higher code of duty, a sort of improved Platonism without root or motive. No! it was the simple story of the Cross of Calvary, and the empty sepulchre in the garden, the marvellous death of One 'numbered with transgressors,' and the astounding miracle of His Resurrection. It was by telling how the Son of God died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, that Apostles and Apostolic men changed the face of the world, gathered mighty churches, and turned countless sinners into saints.

2. Let us learn for another thing what the foundation of our own personal religion must be, if we really want inward spiritual comfort. That the early Christians possessed such comfort is as plain as the sun at noonday. We read repeatedly in the New

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Testament of their joy, and peace, and hope, and patience, and cheerfulness, and contentment. We read in ecclesiastical history of their courage and firmness under the fiercest persecution, of their uncomplaining endurance of sufferings, and their triumphant deaths. And what was the mainspring of their peculiar characters, characters which excited the admiration even of their bitterest enemies, and puzzled philosophers like Pliny? There can only be one reply. These men had a firm grasp of the two great facts which S. Paul proclaimed first and foremost to the Corinthians, the Death and Resurrection of their great Head, Jesus Christ the Lord. Let us never be ashamed of walking in their steps. It is cheap and easy work to sneer at 'dogmatic theology' and old-fashioned creeds and modes of faith, as if they were effete and worn-out things, unfit for this enlightened nineteenth century. But, after all, what are the fruits of modern philosophy, and the teaching of cold abstractions, compared to the fruits of the despised dogmas of distinctive Christianity? If you want to see peace in life, and hope in death, and consolation felt in sorrow, you will never find such things except among those who rest on the two great facts of our text, and can say, 'I live by faith in the Son of God, who died for my sins, and was raised again for my justification.'

II. Let me turn now to another aspect of the subject before us. We have seen what the truths were which S. Paul proclaimed in the first place to the Corinthians, and what were the effects which they produced. Let us now try to grasp and examine the reasons why he was led to assign them such a prominent position.

The inquiry is a very interesting one. I cannot hold with some that S. Paul adopted this course only because he was commissioned and commanded to do so. I think the reasons lie far deeper than this. Those reasons are to be sought in the necessities and condition of fallen human nature. I believe that man's wants could never have been met and satisfied by any other message than that which S. Paul brought to Corinth; and if he had not brought it, he would have come thither in vain.

For there are three things about man in every part of the world which force themselves on our notice, whenever we sit down to examine his nature, position, and constitution. He is a creature with a sense of sin and accountableness at the bottom of his heart; a creature continually liable to sorrow and trouble from his cradle to his grave;—and a creature who has before him the certainty of death, and a future state at last. These are three great facts which stare us in the face everywhere, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. Travel all over the world, and they meet you, both among the most highly educated Christians, and the most untutored savages. Go

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about our own country, and study the family life of the most learned philosophers, and the most ignorant peasants. Everywhere, and in every rank and class, you will have to make the same report. Everywhere you will find these three things: sorrow, death, and the sense of sin. And the position I boldly take up is this: that nothing can be imagined or conceived more admirably suited to meet the wants of human nature than the very doctrine which S. Paul began with at Corinth—the doctrine of Christ dying for our sins and rising again for us from the grave. It fits the need of man, just as the right key fits the lock.

It would have been worse than useless if S. Paul had begun his work at Corinth by telling men to be virtuous and moral, and keeping back Christ. It is just as useless now. It even does positive harm. To awaken human nature, and then not show it God's prescription may lead to most mischievous consequences. I know no case so pitiable as that of the man who sees clearly sin, sorrow, and death on one side and does not see clearly Christ dying for sins and rising again for sinners on the other. Such a man is just the person to sink into flat despair, or to take refuge in the delusive theology of the Church of Rome. No doubt we may sleep the sleep of unconversion for many years, and feel nothing of spiritual doubts and fears. But once let a man's conscience become uneasy, and crave peace, and I know no medicine which can cure him, and keep him from soul-ruining error, except the first things which S. Paul delivered at Corinth,—I mean the two doctrines of Christ's Cross and Resurrection.

BISHOP RYLE.

III. OUTLINE ON THE GOSPEL

Confession and Petition.

God, be merciful to me a sinner. S. LUKE xviii. 13.



It is to the publican that I desire chiefly to direct your attention; and I shall treat these well-known words first as a confession, and then as a petition.

I. First, then, the well-known words are a confession. 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.' They are obviously and necessarily a confession of sin, grounded, as the words themselves show us, upon a deep conviction of sin.

And, first, mark that there is an individuality in the conviction, and in the confession to which the conviction leads. I do not simply

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refer to the fact that he speaks of himself emphatically, in the original, as 'the sinful one,' but I refer to the fact that he gives no thought to others; he draws no invidious contrast between himself and others who may be as bad or worse; but he says, 'God, be merciful to me.' Now, I will ask you to mark this, because this is far more than a simple confession of the general corruption of his nature. It is far more than a general confession that he, in common with the rest of mankind, is more or less sinful before God. This is the way our church-goers get off on Sunday. This is the way in which so many of you, perhaps, are quite content to say, 'I am a miserable sinner.' You have no objection to be as miserable a sinner as the miserable sinners around you. You have no objection to make the humblest confession,—to use the words of strongest self-abasement, as long as they are words which are applicable generally to those with whom you are worshipping. And so it is that, Sunday after Sunday, in the lowly confession of the Church, men and women join who are very far from the spirit of the publican, and who would be very grievously offended if the preacher were to point to them, and to say, 'These are your sins. You individually are a sinner.' I say, then, that the publican so confessed his sins, with such an individuality of conviction, and with such an individuality of acknowledgment before God, as that he did not take off the edge of the confession. He did not take off the edge of his self-humiliation by simply throwing himself into a mass of other persons. It is, 'God, be merciful to me.'

And, in order that we may follow his example, and may be humbled before our God because of our sins, and may seek for His mercy, it becomes us to examine into our own hearts and lives, according to the standard of God's word. What do ye more than others?

If we would have real conviction of sin, if we truly want to see ourselves as we are in the sight of God, if we do not want to deal with this matter superficially, but want to go into our own character and position and prospects honestly, we must consider our sins as they are aggravated by the advantages which we may possess.

II. But the confession, you will observe, is thrown into the form of a petition, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinful one—one whose sin seems to stand out so peculiarly and with such aggravation as that I may call myself, emphatically, the sinful one.' And let me say, before I pass on, that it is always a very bad sign when any professions of repentance are accompanied with extenuating circumstances and with self-apology before God.

Here is no pleading of extenuating circumstances, and no throwing off the guilt upon others, but a very remarkable word is used for this 'be merciful to me.' It is a word which implies the idea, not of

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vague mercy, and mercy shown by any and every means, but it is mercy in the sense of being propitiated; and, if I were to translate it quite literally, the translation of the prayer would be, 'God, *be propitiated* to me a sinner.'

I ask you to take this confession and petition of the publican home with you. I am well aware that the subject upon which I have been preaching, however seasonable, is not a welcome one. It is not a subject that people care very much to hear about, for, beyond a certain point, we do not like to look very much into our own hearts. When once we begin to search into them, and to read our past lives and our present character in the light of God's Word, there is so much that is humbling, so much that lays us in the very dust, so much that may make us for a while even doubt whether any work of grace has been begun in us at all, that it is, I am afraid, an employment from which we often turn. Be persuaded of this, that where there is a deep real work of grace, there is deep and growing conviction of sin. Give me this as an element of the work of grace in the soul, and I believe it to be one of the most satisfactory evidences we can have that the work is, indeed, of God.

CANON MILLER.

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

Christians instructed by Baal's Priests.

And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. 1 KINGS xviii. 26.



THE conduct of these ministers of an idol is well fitted to put to shame the disciples of Christ; so that, when we pass in thought to the grand scene on Mount Carmel, we ought to feel as much rebuked by what we observe in the champions of falsehood, as animated by the deportment and success of the champion of truth. For once, then, put yourselves under the teaching of idolaters: the ministers of Christ are going to give way to the ministers of Baal, and allow them to take the place of instructors of the people. There are two or three great respects in which, as we think, Baal's priests set us a most instructive example.

I. We shall begin first with noticing their zeal: they were willing

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to suffer, as you read, 'and cut themselves with knives and lancets until the blood gushed out.' And assuredly the zeal and self-devotion with which idolaters will act on their mistakes, ought to put us to the blush for the lukewarmness and cowardice which we often display in acting on our truths. It might be thought, if you were to draw your conclusions from the deportment of the great mass of Christians, that it had been the object of the gospel to release men from all that rigour and all that self-chastisement which natural religion had always more or less dictated. But on the contrary, the gospel has only corrected erroneous notions as to what this rigour should be, and as to how the chastisement should be applied: the severest rules that were ever laid down by the Indian devotee exceed not those prescribed by Christianity. What think ye of 'crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts'? What think ye of what has been read in the second lesson of this morning's service—of 'cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye'? It is all figure, you reply: it is all metaphor. I know it; and the Indian devotee might be regarded as taking literally what was designed to be spiritually understood. But is there no meaning in the figure? Is nothing denoted by the metaphor? Or rather, where there is such immense strength of figurative expression, is it only a light task or a nominal labour, which is enjoined on the disciples of Christ? Not so: scriptural statements may require to be spiritually interpreted; but some men seem to think that to interpret spiritually is to take away all the spirit, all the strength, from a passage. Where the figure is singularly energetic, the thing figured must be proportionably difficult or great: it were to accuse the Bible of the worst exaggeration, to suppose that it drew its metaphors from what is gigantic, when it had to delineate only what is trifling. Take heed, then, that ye deceive not yourselves. It is not without conflict, it is not without struggle, it is not without sacrifice, it is not without self-chastisement, that ye may look to be saved; and the question for your private, your instant consideration is, whether you are acting on the meaning of those precepts of the gospel which demand, under strong figures, the mortification of the flesh, and the surrender of everything which may be a hindrance to piety.

And here it is that the priests of Baal give their first lesson. They served a god whom they invested with sanguinary attributes, and to whom, as they supposed, it would be acceptable that they should lacerate their bodies whilst acting as his worshippers. And they did not at all shrink from doing what their creed required them to do. Listen to the description: 'They cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out.' You are to observe the expression, 'after their manner:' it implies a

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habit or a custom ; so that it was their usual practice thus to wound themselves when ministering at the altar of Baal. It was not that, on this very great occasion, when religion and even life were at stake, they were wrought up into a kind of frenzy, and therefore prompted to the doing what, in a moment of less excitement, they would have quite refused to do. It was 'their manner'; and, if the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed made them more than commonly prodigal of their blood, at least they were accustomed to shed it in performing the rites of their religion. Ah, Christians, can it be necessary for us to enlarge on the emphatic condemnation which those priests of Baal are pronouncing on yourselves? Will your zeal stand the being brought into comparison with theirs? Is it your manner, as it was theirs, to submit to precepts which impose painful duties, requiring you to give up what you might like to keep, or to undergo what you might like to avoid? We ask whether this be your manner? Not merely whether, on some grand solemnity, when thousands are gathered upon Carmel, and you are called upon to act in the sight of the world, you can perform an act of self-denial, resist a strong passion, or relinquish a favourite object; but whether it be your habit, when you are more withdrawn from public observation, when Carmel is exchanged for the greater privacy of your own households, or your own scenes of business, to keep a check on every evil propensity, and to labour, according to the direction of S. Paul, to present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God? Appetites, are they your masters, or are you theirs? Money, do ye consider yourselves as actually its proprietors, or only as stewards, who will have to give account of its distribution? Pleasures, do you abstain from those of whose lawfulness there may be doubt? Severities, do you practise those which appear likely to further the great ends of moral discipline? Alas, alas! Baal was better served than is Christ. Baal's yoke was heavy; but nevertheless it was borne: Christ's yoke is light; but how is it shifted off and evaded!

And will not, think you, the very heathen rise up against us in the judgment, and condemn us, if they inflict upon themselves excruciating torments, and wear down the body by incessant exactions, just because they find themselves so directed by a fabulous theology; whilst we, with all the advantages of a full revelation, grudge those sacrifices which are to be a thousandfold compensated, and throw off those restraints which, after all, would but make us masters of ourselves?

II. But we go on to a second and wholly different respect, in which the idolatrous priests may be considered as reading a great lesson to ourselves. They persevered in spite of the keen ridicule of Elijah. After having been for hours engaged in ineffectual supplication, you might have thought that they would have been abashed by such

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sarcastic words as these: 'He is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.' But, so far from being abashed and shrinking away with confusion of face, they seem rather to have been encouraged to the making fresh efforts to attract the notice and succour of their idol. And they were immeasurably more admirable in this, than had they not persevered in the face of persecution and violence. It is certain, whatever may be the causes to which the fact should be ascribed, that in the matter of religion, and perhaps in almost every other, there is nothing which men find it so difficult to bear as ridicule. They can brave a frown, but be quite daunted by a laugh; and a sneer will appal them, when they would not have shrunk from a sword. When we deal faithfully with the young, and set honestly before them the difficulties they will have to encounter, if they separate from the world, and give themselves to the duties of religion, we always lay our main stress on the ridicule which they must expect to excite, requiring them to examine, before making their decision, whether they stand prepared to be counted 'fools for Christ's sake.' And it is mainly because this point is imperfectly examined, and the decision prematurely made, that we have so many instances of a falling away amongst the young—those who have begun to all appearance well, and with good promise of perseverance, relapsing, after a while, into the habits and associations which they had resolved to abandon. You will find, we believe, that, in the majority of cases, the lapse is to be traced to the power of ridicule. It is not that the young person grows unwilling to forego pleasures and to make sacrifices, with a view to his own eternal welfare. It is rather that, finding himself despised, and held in contempt, and sneered at by companions, he is induced to get back their good opinions by giving up his new principles. That there is immeasurable folly in this is a point on which, as you may all well perceive, it were a waste of time to spend argument; but the melancholy thing is, that, in nine out of ten of the modes in which men lose their souls, there is no place for argument: the risk and the madness are self-evident; but this does not make men one jot the more on their guard, not one jot the less willing to be deceived and destroyed. There is not one of you, neither do we suppose the man is anywhere to be found, who will be ready to go into a calculation of the for and against, and declare that he makes the balance on the side of irreligion and the world in preference to God.

III. But we must not yet displace these priests from the position of instructors; they have another lesson to deliver, before we resume our office. They have furnished one lesson by their zeal, and a second by their courage: their zeal in being ready to suffer; their

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courage, in being undaunted by ridicule. The third lesson is furnished by their importunity: they persisted in praying, though no answer was vouchsafed; and, in this respect, we think them yet more admirable than in the others. We have already said that amid the superstitions and errors of paganism might be discovered, if there were diligent search, many fragments of great truths, which can only be supposed to have been handed down by tradition, but which have become corrupted or mutilated in the lengthened transmission. And we believe that we should occasionally find the heathen holding fast a truth which, with all our superior information and advantages, we are disposed to let go. For it is one effect of revelation to invigorate reason; and reason, when made keener and more energetic, will suggest doubts and raise objections, which would hardly occur if the mind were less quickened. Hence a truth which might be received in simplicity and adhered to with tenacity by an idolater, may be lost or weakened amongst Christians; just because there is, unavoidably, a more questioning spirit, less willingness to take on trust, and to believe where we cannot explain. And may not this be partially the case in regard of the great matter of prayer? Many are disposed to question the possible efficacy of importunate prayer, grounding their objection on the confessed attributes of God; and arguing that it is like supposing God a creature, variable as one of ourselves, to suppose Him capable of being acted on by our reiterated petitions, but the truth is, that God having once commanded us to 'pray without ceasing,' His unchangeableness becomes a reason for praying without ceasing. It is here that His unchangeableness comes in: He has irrevocably fixed that we shall obtain such or such a blessing, if we reach a certain point in importunity; but that we shall miss it if we come short of that point. And thus, in place of any disagreement, there is the most thorough harmony between the truths that 'with God is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' and that, nevertheless, we must ask if we hope to obtain—and that, not once, nor twice, but frequently, as those who know that importunity may prevail where there has been for a long time refusal.

H. MELVILL.

Elijah's Disappointment.

And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?
I KINGS xix. 13.

THIS morning we read the story of Elijah's strength, of the double triumph of his faith, over the sins of man and over the delay of God's forgiveness for their sins. Like the righteous man

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described in the Psalm, 'his heart was established, and did not shrink, until he had seen his desire upon his enemies;' then, when it was known that the Lord was God in Israel, and that he was His servant, and that He had turned the people's heart back again, then he prayed with faith as steadfast as when he bore witness, or executed judgment, until 'the heavens were black with clouds and with wind, and there was a great rain;' nor was he then worn out with his work, but being strong in spirit even his body was strengthened: 'The hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.'

I. So ended the glorious day's work—the manifestation, as we said, of Elijah's strength. This chapter which we have read this evening shows us a picture not less noble of Elijah in his weakness. No sooner had the victory at Carmel been gained than it appeared that it was not yet to be decisive. Israel's heart was turned back again; all the people 'fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord He is the God: the Lord He is the God!' But Jezebel's heart was neither turned nor broken; she meant to continue the fight for Baal; Ahab would not resist her, and how could the people resist without him? 'When he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.' His servant, who certainly had been with him on Mount Carmel,—the Jews say it was the widow's son of Zarephath, whom he had raised from the dead,—had no doubt ministered to him at the sacrifice, and had watched with him for the rain while he prayed. Possibly the young man may have been as much in danger as his master; we at any rate know that he accompanied him in his flight. They went together into the land of Judah; there no doubt the good king Jehoshaphat would have protected them, though from what Obadiah says in the former chapter we may suppose that Ahab would have sent after him even there. At any rate, they did not think it wise to stop in Jerusalem or any of the nearer cities, but went on to Beersheba on the utmost border of the wilderness. And Elijah left his servant there. Here he was among friends, among worshippers of the Lord his God; here he was safe from fear and temptation, here he might enjoy all the blessings of communion with souls that were as his own: going with the multitude into the House of God, in the voice of praise and thanksgiving, among such as keep holyday.

But Elijah did not stay there: 'He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness.' His soul was vexed within him, and he would carry his trouble alone to his God; he was troubled, not by the danger to his life, for that was past, but by the failure of his work. He was the only prophet of the Lord left in Israel: single-handed

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he had encountered the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and had prevailed; yet even after his victory he was forced to abandon the field. And the enemy had a force in reserve to occupy it, the four hundred prophets of the grove,—representatives, it seems, of a still more wicked worship than that of Baal,—now had the ear of king and people to themselves. It was as though all Israel were like the man described by our Lord, out of whom one unclean spirit was cast, but the soul was left empty until he returned with seven other spirits more wicked than himself. So Elijah felt: ‘I have laboured in vain: I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain;’ and he prayed to be allowed to retire from the hopeless battle: ‘It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.’

And as yet the Lord does not answer him, certainly does not rebuke him: He only sends him strength and comfort to sustain him till an answer should be sent; He gives him heavenly food, in the strength whereof he went, like Moses before him and Jesus after him, fasting for forty days and forty nights, yet not worn out nor weakened, through the wilderness unto Horeb, the mount of God. There God appeared unto him, not, as to Israel of old, in the likeness of devouring fire, but as we read—the words need nothing added to bring out their lesson—‘the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle’ (like Moses, ‘he hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God’) ‘and went out, and stood in the entering-in of the cave, and behold, there came a voice unto him, saying, What doest thou here, Elijah?’ A very gentle rebuke, no doubt, spoken by the still small voice, but a rebuke still. There yet remained work to be done for God, that could not be done in the wilderness: why was not the one man there to do it who could do it? He gives his answer, an answer sufficient to justify himself before men, though not before God: he had done all he could, and all was in vain: ‘I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts: but the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.’

II. The first duty God lays on him in answer, the first promise He makes him, seems to admit that the failure was as complete as he thought it: the only thing was, that God could avenge the sins of Israel, if they could not be cured. Elijah is not sent back into the land of Israel, but, ‘Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus;’ then he is bidden to anoint Hazael to chastise all Israel,

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and Jehu to chastise the house of Ahab: even Elisha, it is said, shall carry out any portion of God's vengeance that is not executed by these. If the work of God fails, the loss is not theirs who tried to do it, but theirs who prevented its being done: it is not Elijah who has to fear the sword of Jezebel, but Jezebel who has to fear the sword of Jehu. And to the fierce temper of Elijah the Gileadite, who was of another manner of spirit, our Lord confesses, than that which He has taught us by the Gospel, this consolation might have been enough, to know that he and his fellow-labourers and fellow-sufferers would not be left unavenged. It might have been enough, or so at least men may think who know how the meekness and gentleness of Christ is foreshadowed even amid the terrors of the law. The Lord goes on to tell of a work for Elijah to do, and a fruit of the work he has done, very different from the cruel vengeance of Hazael, or even of Jehu: 'Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth that hath not kissed him.'

And Elijah felt that that was his truest comfort and his highest duty. The call of Hazael and Jehu he left to wait for another generation; therefore if the vengeance must come, it might come when God pleased, but Israel should be allowed a longer trial first. All Elijah's own care was that the faithful seven thousand might not be left without a prophet, yea, that there might be a prophet who might even recall some of the faithless to their God. He had laboured, and saw no fruit of his labour; but if he went on a little while, and left Elisha to labour after him, he should see fruit. He learnt the spirit of those words which the prophet ascribes to a greater than Elijah: 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God: and now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.'

III. To labour much and have no profit is the curse God laid upon Cain; to labour much, and have just enough profit to live by, is what He laid upon Adam, and what we, while this world lasts and we are in it, must not expect to be free from. Not the first Adam only but the Second had to labour upon these terms; it was only out of the travail of His soul that He could see anything to satisfy Him, or receive any reward for His work. He wept for Jerusalem, and Jerusalem rejected Him—only a remnant escaped, whom the house of Israel cast out from themselves. Yea, why should we speak of Jerusalem or Israel? He died for all the world, and the elect only shall be saved by His death. Many have been jealous for Him, and

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would have it that He did not labour in vain nor spend His strength for nought—that if any were not saved it was because He did not die for them; but the Word of God declares too plainly the contrary. He died for all; He spared not a drop of His Blood, even though He might see no fruit of it even to the days of eternity; if they did perish, it should not be because He had not done enough to save them. He did not ask, ‘To what purpose is this waste?’ but poured out His love freely, over head and over feet, to be a sweet savour unto God, not only in them that are saved, but in them that perish.

And we also may learn the same lesson which Elijah learnt, may follow the example of unstinted love such as Jesus manifested. ‘Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.’ The result may not be, in human eyes, at all proportionate to the labour it cost; but the least thing done for God, or gained to His kingdom, is in truth worth more than all the labours of all mankind could be; those who work in faith are enabled by their faith to see things as God sees them, and therefore they can rejoice in their works as God does.

W. H. SIMCOX.

The Call of Elisha.

So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him. 1 KINGS xix. 19-21.

HERE we see one of the methods by which the prophetic ministry was propagated and maintained in Israel. It was not, you may have remarked, like the Jewish priesthood, a matter of hereditary descent. The son did not become a prophet because his father had been a prophet before him. Like Jeremiah each prophet was the subject of a special predestination to his work. ‘Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.’ But each prophet was called to his work by some especial token or influence, and then, either as a student in one of the colleges or schools of the prophets, as they were called, or as an attendant upon a great teacher, he received a kind of education for his future life.

Elisha appears to have been a man of substance. He was ploughing in the field with twelve yoke of oxen, at Abel-meholah, in the valley of the Jordan, when Elijah passed on his way back from the

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great vision which he had received in Horeb. Elijah does not seem to have spoken; he merely cast his mantle on Elisha, and then passed on. This act, indeed, was symbolical. It had, like many of the former acts of the prophets, such as rending the dress, or putting ashes on the head, an ascertained and recognised meaning. The prophet's mantle was a visible sign of the robe of spiritual power which encompassed him, and to cast the mantle on another was to call him to share the labour, the glory, the difficulty, the responsibility, the danger of the prophetic office. Although Elijah had not spoken, this significant action was perfectly understood. Elisha obeyed its purpose, and he ran after the silent prophet who was already vanishing from his sight. He had one, only one condition, he would just take leave of his parents and receive their blessing, and then he would follow the prophet. Elijah assents. But Elisha must return soon, considering the greatness of the destiny before him. The original would be here better rendered, 'Go, return, for how great a thing have I done unto thee!' Elisha is bent upon showing the undivided allegiance which he owes to the prophet, the completeness of his self-surrender. Up to that moment his farm on the banks of the Jordan had been his all, as in a later age their boats and nets had been everything to those fishermen on the Sea of Galilee who were also predestined to the Apostolate of the world. Elisha does not linger to drop regrets over a cherished past, from which he is parting for ever; he forthwith slays the oxen with which he had just been ploughing, and he takes even the plough tackling for fuel, by which he may burn their flesh, and he gives one parting entertainment to his acquaintances in the neighbourhood, that they may have no doubt either about his goodwill towards themselves, or of his fixed determination and lofty resolution, and then he leaves the scene of his labours, he leaves his fields, his home, his all, to become the servant of Elijah. Is this, think you, to be looked upon as only and strictly an incident in the life of an ancient prophet? Has it no permanent, no higher application? Has it no human significance?

There is some risk of blinding ourselves to the real meaning of the Old Testament, of its urgent and striking appeals to the human conscience, to the Christian life, by saying of this and that thing, it is only Oriental, and has therefore no relevancy for a modern European. Certainly there is a superficial element of custom and of ceremony in the life described in the Old Testament, which does belong to the ancient East, and which is untransferable to the circumstances of our own day and country. But human nature on the one side, and the great laws of God's providential dealings on the other, were in the East two thousand eight hundred years ago, exactly what they are now, and what occurred then was, as an Apostle says, 'written for our

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learning, that we through patience and comfort of the ancient Scriptures might have hope; hope, as well as other virtues, which are to be won from their perusal.

The call of Elisha has its place, not merely in the history of his order, not merely in the history of his country, but in the history of humanity, and as such it must be regarded as an astonishing instance of the power of religious influence. The silent prophet passes; he drops his mantle, and the life of another fellow-man is agitated to the centre, to its inmost depths; its whole current and direction is from that moment changed; he yields to an attraction; he does not analyse it, he obeys. And it may be well to ask ourselves in what—putting aside for to-day, but by no means ignoring it, the great question of God's supernatural grace—in what did this influence, viewed on its human side, in what did this attraction consist? For it is not to be supposed that the obedience of Elisha had nothing to do with those motives and laws of conduct which govern the actions of thoughtful and conscientious men now. It is not to be supposed that Elijah put forth some force which was literally magical, magical in such a sense, that it exerted upon Elisha's will an influence for which no account could be given in reason, a magnetic influence which could not but be obeyed. Had, indeed, this been the case, the interest of this history would have been shifted from the department of spiritual and moral life to the department of physical life, and it would be, perhaps, more properly investigated in some lecture-room than from the pulpit. No! mighty as was the influence of Elijah, Elisha's liberty was not restrained, still less destroyed by it. He was perfectly free to have resisted it. If he did not do so, if he yielded at once, if he decided instantaneously on an obedience which, as we may for the moment think, ought to have been preceded and justified by an exhaustive discussion, this was because there must have been a preparatory educational process going on for some time within him. He must have had his thoughts, affections, aspirations, which only waited the occasion to be combined, to be expressed in actions; and so when the great prophet passed by him, all the scattered reasons for being drawn towards him coalesced into a single ray of moral light and moral warmth, and determined his future disciple's course, impelled him to an act of such unreserved obedience.

It is, then, material to ask what must at least have been some of the motives which led Elisha thus to obey.

I. And, first, Elijah would have represented in Elisha's eyes a great cause, a great or imperious idea, or truth, which had lain for centuries in the soul of every Israelite; that idea was the existence, the manifestation of the one living and true God who had revealed Himself to Israel. For while the surrounding nations were in different

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degrees of heathen darkness and degradation, Israel by a singular exercise of God's favour, had been, indeed, chosen to know His will, and in that knowledge to know much, though by no means with all the fulness which we Christians now have the means of knowing Him, of His character, of His nature, of His attributes. To treasure that knowledge, to hand it on from generation to generation, to make it the inspiring principle of national as well as of individual thought and life, this was the appointed task of the sacred people, again and again prescribed in their sacred law, again and again enforced by the exhortations of their prophets, again and again illustrated by the lives and by the works of their most representative saints and leaders. In quiet times not merely every prophet, every member of the priesthood, and of the Levitical tribe, but even every Israelite in some sense represented this great truth, for every Israelite was admitted by circumcision into a covenant with God, which bound him to loyalty to God's revelation of Himself, just as every baptized Christian bears the sacred sign, as our baptismal service expresses it, 'in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.' In quiet times this representative duty of every believer in a revelation, towards the revelation which he believes, is accepted, at least in terms, without difficulty. It is only, as our Lord said, 'when persecution or tribulation ariseth because of the word,' that certain classes of character are, as a matter of course, offended.

When Elijah appeared upon the scene of history it seemed as if the revelations committed to Israel were on the point of being trodden out by a young and vigorous idolatry. The marriage of Ahab the king of Israel, with Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of Sidon, had led to the propagation of the queen's religion, the worship of the Phœnician Baal, one of those seductive varieties of worship of the vital forms of nature in a personified shape which exercised so extraordinary a sway over the imagination and reason of the ancient world, and which, although in modern times they have adopted a more refined guise, are by no means strange or unwelcome to the modern world. So seductive was that superstition, and so commanding the influence of the court, so vigorous, so trenchant the policy of the queen, that seven thousand was the total number of Israelites who had escaped the taint, who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. And at great trial times like these, great causes become almost necessarily identified with the names of individuals. Truths are, for a time, impersonated in a single man. And Elijah was to the revelation of the one God, Maker of heaven and earth, what at a later age

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S. Paul was to the truth of man's justification, through Christ's merits without legal obedience, at least in certain portions of the Church,—what S. Athanasius was, during the great Arian struggle, to the true Godhead of Jesus Christ, as it had been taught by the Apostles.

As men looked on Elijah moving rapidly from one scene of danger to another, in those troublous times, the whole history of the earlier, the old Mosaic revelation seemed to live again, seemed to speak in him; behind his individual voice and gesture there was felt the presence of a great and living cause, of a mighty and eternal truth; and as a consequence he exercised an influence greatly out of proportion to his personal position. It was not the man himself, it was the divine cause, it was the heaven-sent revelation which he represented, which won, which enchained to him the hearts of those who still believed in it. Elisha bent before the truth of which his master was himself the servant.

II. The first condition of a deep religious influence, proceeding whether from individuals or from churches, is a clear, positive creed, clear and positive whether it be large or small. A man must know, at least, what he does believe. Elijah would have been altogether powerless, had he only insisted on the falsehoods and superstitions of Jezebel and her prophets. He would have been powerless had he merely surrounded the revelation of Sinai with a garniture of the finest sentiment and poetry, leaving it doubtful whether he himself believed it to be God's truth or not. He was powerful because men knew that he had no sort of doubt about his creed, about its exact frontier, about its absolute certainty; and Elisha felt the passage, not of a mere man, but of a mighty cause or truth represented in the man, and he obeyed it.

But then, secondly, in representing a great cause, a mere official representation is not enough. For religious influence personal qualities are wanted, qualities in harmony with the requirements of the cause or truth represented. Eli and his sons represented the Mosaic revelation to Israel in their day, but they only made the Lord's people to transgress. Alexander the Sixth, and Leo the Tenth, represented in an official sense of the term to Western Christendom, but they certainly did not recommend it to the consciences of men. The ordinary Hanoverian bishops of a century ago were by their office representatives of Christianity in the Church of England, but, with a few splendid exceptions, their representation, too, was strictly heartless, official, and powerless where it was not, as in Hoadley's case, utterly repulsive. In order to reach human hearts and mould the affections, some sort of personal conformity to the ideal represented is needed, as well as the official right to represent. And Elijah would

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have been felt by Elisha to have this personal title to represent this cause of God superadded to the official one. Every Israelite, we may be assured, whether friend or foe, whether in open league with the apostate court of Jezebel, or in secret correspondence with the scattered schools of the prophets, every Israelite had heard of the stern mien and lofty proportions of a character which seemed to its contemplators to belong to another world. They knew that if anywhere, here was a perfect simplicity of purpose; here was a determination to live and to die for the sake of the God of the Patriarchs who had brought Israel out of Egypt, who had spoken from Sinai. They knew that here was an unflinching courage which shrank not from encounter with the cruel, the wily idolatress who ruled the policy of Israel. They must have been well aware that the ties of flesh and blood did not fetter the great prophet's liberty; for, like John the Baptist, nine centuries later, he had prepared for his ministry in the solitude of the desert; and he then had suddenly appeared in the very palace of the weak and apostate monarch, to denounce his sin, and foretell the judgment which awaited him. In an age of decaying faith, in an age of progressive moral deterioration, in an age of general apostasy, Elijah stood forth from the mass of men in almost solitary grandeur. He must have been felt to be the typical saint and hero of the old theocracy; he must have been recognised as embodying in the highest degree the moral power which belonged to a life so shaped and so led as to express before men's eyes his strong and firm conviction of the Sinaitic revelation. True it was, as we have heard in this afternoon's lesson, that Elijah too was at times subject even to the deepest sense of discouragement. When, after his great victory over the assembled prophets of Baal upon Carmel, it seemed for a moment as if the tide of public feeling in Israel had really turned, men cried in their enthusiasm, 'The Lord, He is the God! the Lord, He is the God!' but the triumphant change was but of short duration. The day of Carmel was soon forgotten; Ahab was still Ahab, and Jezebel had not ceased to be Jezebel; and the multitude which, for a moment, had obeyed with fervour the authority of the prophet, soon fell back into the practice of the ensnaring and voluptuous rites of the Phœnician god with a new enthusiasm.

And then Elijah felt that despondency of which great and ardent souls alone are capable. God seemed to be hiding His face; the prophet's faith was almost slipping from him, the whole order of the moral world was, in his eyes, for the moment confused, dark, incomprehensible, out of course. Jezebel was again in power. She was menacing his life, and he, in truth, is weary of his life, weary of the apparently hopeless struggle in which he is engaged, and he returns

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to the southern desert in which he had learned his earliest lessons, where he is well out of the way of the levity, of the frivolity of his apostate countrymen; where he is face to face with the savage desolation of nature in a scene that seems to correspond to the blank of his own inward misery. He longed to die; and when a voice from above reaches his conscience in his retreat, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' he can only reply by a bitter complaint that God has abandoned His cause, that He has left His prophet to struggle undefended, alone, vanquished. Does this forfeit the prophet's influence? Is it fatal to the commanding, to the unique greatness of his character? Certainly, we must admit it would have been a more perfect course to have trusted God throughout, to have trusted Him in failure, not less than amid success; but Elijah, great as he was, was not the all-perfect; and his failure was itself one of those forms of failure which are only possible to faith and devotion. They to whom life seems worthless because God's cause, not theirs, but God's, is imperilled or defeated for the time, are, in all generations among the few. To the many, the whole question is of no great concern. Whether the Church of Christ is winning her way among human souls, or losing it; whether she is extending the frontiers of the Redeemer's kingdom, or barely maintaining them; whether her ministers are speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, or are pandering weakly to the popular unbelief, all this troubles them not. They eat, they drink, they walk, they sleep as if all were well, just as did their fathers in the olden days before them. The anguish, the discontent, the fierce desperation of Elijah are the products—it may be they are the unregulated and diseased products—but they are the products of a noble passion, whereof the many know nothing; it is the noble, the generous passion which is careful only for the honour of God, which is uncontrollable when He seems to be defeated or dishonoured. No! If Elisha did know of Elijah's retreat in profound discouragement, almost in despair, to the rocks of Horeb, he would not have been, I dare say it, less open to the great prophet's influence. The poignant despondency of a great faith is almost its virtue. Elisha would have felt not the less drawn to the solitary at Horeb than to the conqueror at Carmel.

III. There is a third element of influence yet, beyond: the influence which belongs to a soul often in communion with God. This is less easy to seize, to describe, or to measure, than the weight which belongs either to the representation of a great cause, or truth, or to personal elevation of character. This cannot be mapped out in words or in actions. It is nothing exactly tangible; it is an atmosphere which hovers around a life, and which we are conscious of breathing, but that is all. When we approach it, it is not a matter

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of manner or gesture, of expressive words and studied silence. It is not to be resolved into any outward form ; it is too volatile, if you like, it is too strictly super-sensuous, it is too altogether appertaining to the region of spirit, to be registered by any definite tests and marks in the sphere of matter. Yet who has not sometimes felt this indescribable influence, this sure certificate of nearness to God, which the few privileged souls of both sexes in all stations of society, unconsciously to themselves, but most surely exert? It is something beyond character : it is tone. It is a something beyond goodness : it is holiness. It needs no language to express it : it is felt instinctively. Elisha may well have felt it—as we read the narrative we know it—as Elijah passed along the field of Abel-meholah.

And this history suggests two sets of considerations, one for those who exert religious influence, the other for those who yield to it.

And, first, for those who exert it. All wise and thoughtful people may well shrink from the great but unavoidable responsibility of doing so ; the responsibility of saying, whether in words or by acts, to others it little matters, 'Follow me ! Follow me upwards through this path in the light of this or that creed, towards the Throne of Light.' Many men profess altogether to decline any such responsibility, and yet it is certain, that do what we will, we cannot, any one of us, but exert some religious influence. Every man is assuredly the Apostle of something, of evil if not of good. Our very presence is of itself the propagation of some faith. Whether we will or not, we are leading men : we are leading those around us in some direction.

' We scatter seeds with careless hand,
And dream we ne'er shall see them more ;
But, for a thousand years
Their fruit appears
In weeds that mar the land,
Or healthful store.

The deeds we do, the words we say,
Into still air they seem to fleet,
We count them ever past,
But they shall last
In the dread Judgment Day ;
And we shall meet.'

It is better, then, to make a virtue of what is already a necessity, to wield and exert usefully a talent of which we cannot dispossess ourselves altogether, if we would. Some of us are teachers : what is the influence we are exerting on our pupils? Many of us are masters or mistresses : what is the influence we are bringing to bear upon our servants? Others are parents. How are you influencing, in some

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important way you must be influencing, the future of your children? Ah! but you say, 'We wish we could be of use in this way, but then it is an affair of temperament; some people seem to understand it, others do not; and we are among the number.' No, the explanation is simpler, it is more just than this. If when Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha, the mantle of his creed, of his conduct, of his life, Elisha does not respond, there may be another explanation of the failure than that which you are thinking of. Success is impossible, if Elijah represents nothing clear and certain. If he does not know his own mind, if he is only trying to win converts to a few private guesses or crotchets of his own, instead of for a creed which has come from heaven. Success is improbable, again, if Elijah's life is quite out of keeping with his creed, if he is felt to be incapable of that which he recommends, if he has done and ventured nothing for the cause he advocates. It is improbable, too, if he has nothing about him of the air and bearing of an envoy of God, if he is obviously devoted to this world, and only alludes to the next in an official or formal way, and without the accent of a man to whom it is a serious reality. Doubtless God may make His truth do its own work, through His grace in human hearts, in spite of the inconsistencies of its representatives. But then I am speaking of what is probable, and, as a rule, God works through instruments. As a rule Elisha is won by the decision, by the consistency of the unworldliness of Elijah as much as by the apparent intrinsic claims of that which he represents.

And, lastly, there is instruction here for those who yield to religious influence. Some of us, I suppose at least, have known in life something like the passage of an Elijah in our past lives. A religious influence has swept across our path, placing truth, placing duty more clearly before us than we ever knew them before, recommending them by an example of high-minded devotion, of simple, of disinterested life. We have felt its power; have we obeyed it? It may be after a legitimate, a wise hesitation such as was Elisha's, but still, have we obeyed it? Had Elisha refused to acknowledge what was meant by the casting of Elijah's mantle, who can know how vast would have been the difference to the kingdom of Israel, to the kingdom of Judah, to the kingdom of Syria, to the kingdom of God in each, and to himself above all? He was no longer in the same moral position after the divine call had reached him; he could no longer survey, if he would, his twelve yoke of oxen with a perfectly easy conscience as if he had really no duty, no destiny, excepting that of ploughing the field in Abel-meholah. A spell from heaven had crossed his path, and he must decide, either deliberately to acknowledge, or deliberately to ignore it. So it may be, or has been with

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us. The history of this afternoon's lesson will have recalled to those of us who know our Bible, at least two passages in the life of our blessed Redeemer, the call of the disciples, and the call of the man who wished first to bury his father. In our Lord's case it is observable that the call to instant obedience is much more peremptory than in Elijah's. He commands in terms: 'Follow Me.' Elijah only suggests by a symbolical action. Our Lord will allow of no delay even to perform the last duties to a parent's memory. Elijah has no hesitation in allowing Elisha to take leave of his father and mother before entering on the prophetic life. The difference is to be explained by the intrinsic difference between the person of the prophet and the person of the Redeemer. Elijah did but represent the cause of God. In Jesus, as His Apostle said, there dwelt 'the whole fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Elijah's conduct, although that of a saint and hero, was not absolutely perfect. In the life of Jesus, no trace of shortcoming could possibly be detected by the most cynical criticism. They who came near to Elijah came near to one who was irradiated by constant communion with God; they who came near to Jesus, were as the seraphim and cherubim round the throne, whether they knew it or not, close to the very form which the All Holy had assumed on earth. The greater urgency of our Lord is proportioned to His unspeakably higher and more imperative claim. And it is with Him, and not with His prophets, not with any of His instruments or agents, that we have to do. Amid our most trivial duties in this life, on days which are passing by us in the usual round of uneventful routine, He may speak to us as never before. A quiet word may be dropped by a friend, a sentence read in a book, a thought lodged we know not why, or how, in the mind, and we are laid under obligations to a new and more imperious view of life and duty. Not Elijah, but Elijah's Lord has passed and cast His mantle on us.

There is, of course, abundant room for self-delusion of many kinds in the supposed visit of a heavenly call. We may read our fancies in the skies. If we do not take care we may transfigure our own wishes into a divine voice by a process so subtle as to impose upon ourselves. But we are tolerably safe if two conditions are observed. If, first, the duty or line of life prescribed is unwelcome to our natural inclinations; and if, secondly, it does not contradict what we know God has taught us hitherto, if it is an extension of His earlier teaching, not its condemnation. No one who believes that our Lord Jesus Christ is present by His Spirit in His Church can doubt that He will, from time to time, speak thus to souls in virtue of His own promises. No one who knows anything practically of the lives of earnest Christians will question the fact of His having

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done so. And to listen for the footsteps of the Divine Redeemer passing by us in the ordinary conditions of life is a most important part of the probation of every man. How much may depend on following when He beckons us to some higher duty, to some more perfect service, we shall only know when we see all things as they really are, in the light of His Eternity. H. P. LIDDON.

The Still Small Voice.

And after the fire, a still small voice. 1 KINGS xix. 12.

I. **A**S, creeping out of his hiding-place, Elijah stands in the murky darkness, a strange event suddenly breaks the awful silence. A storm bursts forth as if maddened by long imprisonment under the everlasting hills, careering, plunging, thundering, it leaps down the mountain side. 'A great and strong wind rent the mountain, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord.' Elijah is awed at the magnificence of God, but Elijah is comfortless. The Lord was not in the wind. Then the solid mountain begins to vibrate beneath his feet, the ground to undulate, and chasms to yawn; it is an earthquake. But when the shock is over, it leaves Elijah, as before, in cold, comfortless silence. The Lord was not in the earthquake. Then a mighty fire leaps forth, lighting up the dark cliffs, as though the very heavens were on fire over head, swooping past with crackling roar; but when it is gone he is left in the same cold gloominess of spirit. The Lord was not in the fire. 'And after the fire, a still small voice'; a divine afflatus whispering peace and shedding tranquillity over that chafed and troubled spirit, like the Gospel, the gentle voice of grace and love and mercy, of peace and pardon and salvation by Christ. The Lord was in this still small voice, even by the power of His Spirit. This is evident by the effect it had on Elijah, it melts his heart. It speaks in soft accents of kindness to his soul, and it tells him that while God is a God of judgment He is also a God of mercy.

And our Church commemorates the coming down of God to His crushed and comfortless disciples on the day of Pentecost, not in the storm or earthquake or fire but when the darkness of Calvary was past, and the rending of the rocks was over, and the cloven tongues as of fire had dispersed, in that which remained, and still abides, for the Church in all ages of this Gospel dispensation, the still small voice of the Holy Spirit coming down into our hearts, and resting upon us. And there is not one of

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us to whom God has not spoken, is not speaking, in this still small voice.

II. This voice, then, speaking to us in the Word of God, in preaching, brings us all, not into personal, but into spiritual contact with God. True, we are at all times surrounded with His presence. There is no hiding-place in the wide universe which is not penetrated by His eye, and covered by His hand. 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.' We do not feel this as we ought. But if our sensibilities be not utterly blunted, and our conscience seared, there are seasons when we must solemnly feel that God is in contact with us. In times of sickness, when our couch is watered with tears, when the strong man is bowed down, and 'brought into the dust of death'; in seasons of bereavement, when God darkens the clear sky, and death comes in at our window; in the time of pestilence, when the Angel of Death flaps his sable wing over the city, and the mourners go about the streets; in the time of famine, when the 'seven ears are withered, thin and blasted'; and when Want, like a grim spectre, stalks over the land; when War, with his bloody heel, treads down slaughtered men, and the widow's wail mingles with the orphan's cry, who does not at these times tremble with silent awe before the Divine Majesty of God! Yet not in any one, nor in all of these, does God come so nigh as when, by the still small voice of His Holy Spirit, He speaks to the soul. In all these other instances, however near God may be, still He is without us. But by His Spirit He is within us. He breathes into the very chambers of the heart. He lays His hand upon our very thoughts. He turns the current of our affections into new channels, and makes the heart to beat with the pulse of a new life. He comes to 'convince us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,' to reveal the heart to itself in all its sinfulness, and to reveal that Saviour on whom He commands us to believe. Not, indeed, to call up a man's past sins like ghosts to haunt him, not to throw the heart back upon itself, that it may be lashed into frenzy, and driven to despair, but to lead it up in trustful faith to that Saviour who, in the still small voice of His Spirit, breathes pardon and peace and blessing and comfort into every contrite heart and broken spirit.

Every command of God's binds the present moment, and every offer of the Gospel is made in the present hour. 'Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.' He who uses up his morrows in fruitless resolutions of amendment is like the spend-

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thrift who anticipates his income, and overwhelms his future fortune with the debts of the past.

CANON FLEMING.

Elijah's Character.

And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?
1 KINGS xix. 9.

WHEN Jesus Christ, the Son of God, appeared upon earth to give by His works and by His words the final revelation of the will of God, there arrived a crisis in His life when, to confirm the minds of His perplexed followers, there was vouchsafed a supernatural declaration that He was superior to all prophets and teachers, who before Him had been bearers of the divine message. On that memorable occasion the two representatives of the earlier dispensations, who confessed by their presence that a greater than themselves had come amongst men, were Moses and Elijah; Moses the mediator of that law which for many centuries had been the symbol and bond of the national existence of the chosen people of God; and Elijah, who might well be accounted the greatest of the prophets. For, truly, out of all 'the goodly fellowship of the Prophets,' who were from age to age the living witnesses for a righteous God ruling amongst men, and the bold preachers of righteousness alike to kings, and priests, and people, none shine forth with greater lustre in the pages of the Old Testament history than Elijah the Tishbite. In whose character shall we find more heroic intrepidity, more energetic zeal in God's service, more patient endurance of suffering for the truth's sake, more unflinching steadfastness in bearing testimony to the majesty of right and justice? We behold in him a man who, with an utter scorn of his own personal interests, is not afraid to brave unpopularity, and, a stranger to flattery, utter unpalatable truths in high places. In his startling appearances and disappearances, in his ubiquitousness in wholly unexpected times and places, he reminds us of the stories told of a later prophet of the Christian Church, Athanasius the Great. Hear Elijah as he denounces to the guilty monarch of Israel the impending drought of three years: gaze on him as, bearing his solitary witness for Jehovah, he contends with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel: follow him, as in the very vineyard acquired by murderous covetousness he proclaims to Jezebel, the real mistress of the government, the ignominious death which awaited her, and you will form some faint image of one of the true heroes of the world. Here, if ever, was one who never feared the face of man.

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Great, however, as Elijah was, pre-eminent as he was among those who have fought in that world-enduring strife between good and evil, there was an occasion in his life when even his brave heart quailed for a time under the dangers which assailed him, and when the courage of the zealous servant of God was almost overpowered. When Jezebel, the imperious Sidonian princess, who had instigated her husband Ahab to introduce amongst his subjects the false worship of Baal, in which she had been nurtured, heard of the disastrous issue of the great contest on Carmel, and the utter destruction by the sword of the idolatrous priests of whom she accounted herself the special patroness, she vowed vengeance on the head of Elijah. She lost no time in sending a message to him whom she naturally considered her chief enemy. 'So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.' It would be wrong to say that Elijah was terrified by the threat and therefore took to flight. He counted not his life dear to him: he was quite willing, as he shortly showed, to die. It is truer to say that he was dejected and disappointed. His courage and perseverance were sorely tried. All seemed adverse to him. The whole weight of the royal court was exerted to effect his extermination. His countrymen seemed to have no sympathy with him. They followed the fashion of those in power, and with a lax indifference consented to the idolatry which they knew to be sinful, even though it had so recently been manifested to be false and powerless. Elijah was almost tempted to think that God had forsaken him. Success had not crowned his efforts. He was alone against the world. Why should he any longer carry on the weary unprosperous contest? So he retired to Beersheba, out of the land of Israel, which had been the appointed sphere of his mission, into the southernmost town of the land of Judah, on the confines of the wilderness. He may have thought that his retreat here would soon be discovered, and Ahab and Jezebel would send messengers to Jehoshaphat the king demanding his surrender; or it may be permitted us to think that he desired to commit his soul to the Lord his God in solitary communion to learn what was His will concerning him. So leaving his servant behind him, utterly unattended, he went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree, requesting for himself that he might die, and saying, 'It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.'

I. Is not this narrative of the sacred history a true natural delineation of human character? Does it not portray with life-like exactness the very inward reasonings of a brave heart struggling with despair and for the moment overcome? Very tender and loving was

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the dealing of the Lord of the prophet with His servant. He did not upbraid him with a desertion of duty, still less did he grant his immediate request. He knew the heart of His servant and came to his succour. As the wearied man, all exhausted with his hasty flight, lay sleeping under the shelter of the juniper-tree (the broom, as travellers tell us, which in that region affords protection by night from the wind and by day from the sun), a ministering spirit was sent on an errand of mercy. An angel touched him, and bid him arise and eat, and when he looked, beheld provided for his sustenance a cake and a cruse of water. So strengthened yet once and again he went forth a journey of forty days and forty nights to Horeb the Mount of God, as if expecting to receive there, where God of old had revealed Himself to Moses, a special voice from heaven. There he sheltered himself in a cave, not knowing what awaited him. In that secret resting-place, far away from the haunts of men, in the awful solitude of the desert, where man seems to hold converse only with his Maker, the word of the Lord came to the prophet, and a voice was heard crying in clear accents, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' Why here, so far away from the land of Israel? Why here, where there are no kings, no priests, no multitudes to hear the words which I have put in thy mouth? Why here, where I have not sent thee? The prophet's answer was the ready expression of the feelings uppermost in his mind. 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away.' The answer is the answer of disappointment and failing hope; it is the sorrowful confession of defeat and of the futility of prolonging an unequal struggle. The prophet was bidden to go and await the divine reply, abiding yet in the mount. And that reply, which had a parabolic meaning to the hearing ear of spiritual receptiveness, came not in the great and strong wind, nor yet in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but (to use the words of the marginal note of the R. V.) 'in a sound of gentle stillness' echoing those former words, What doest thou here, Elijah? Again did the prophet answer in the same desponding language expressive of unrequited labour and blighted hopes. The world was against him, he could avail nothing, he had come, if God so willed, to die. The divine answer implied at once rebuke and encouragement. It said in effect, Not here in inaction and solitude is thy place, not in caves and deserts is thy mission for Me. Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus, up to thine ancient sphere of action; among the great ones of the earth thou hast yet to work for Me. It is thine to designate new kings for Syria and for Israel, and to call to

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My service another who, when thou hast fulfilled thy allotted term of work, shall fulfil the prophet's office in thy stead. Nor art thou so utterly friendless as thou supposest. Yet are there left, or it may be, yet will I have, seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to the idol-god. Be not afraid; I am with thee. Go, return, linger not here: thy work is not yet done, thy race is not run; thou hast yet to bear witness for Me in many a day of trial. Elijah was not disobedient to the heavenly calling. He did as he was bidden. He lived years after this event to denounce judgment against the king and queen for their foul unrighteousness in the matter of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite; to behold the fulfilment of his prophecy of divine retribution when the dogs licked the blood of Ahab in the pool of Samaria, after he had been slain in the battle of Ramoth-Gilead; to call down fire from heaven on the messengers of Ahaziah, the worthless successor of his father Ahab. He lived on till, finally, in the full glory of a triumph he was carried away from earth in 'a storm accompanied by a fiery phenomenon, which appeared to the eyes of Elisha as a chariot of fire and horses of fire in which his master rode to heaven.'

II. The voice which came to Elijah in the cave of Horeb has not lost its note of mingled warning and encouragement. It is recorded for our instruction: its echoes may be heard, if we will only listen, in the still small voice of conscience. It conveys a message suitable for all times. 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' Surely such words come as a loud call to action, to fresh effort, to comparison of our duties and our performances. They encourage us not to despond, nor shrink from appointed work in the great system of human relations of which we form a part. It is easy for us to imagine a condition of circumstances almost exactly analogous to those of Elijah. We may picture to ourselves the case of a man who has become the advocate of some great and noble cause. He may have within him a strong conviction that he has, under the guiding hand of Providence, been raised up for this very purpose. It may be his duty to assert some forgotten principle of justice, or to vindicate the rights of some oppressed class, or to proclaim some neglected doctrines of the faith once delivered to the saints. In carrying out the work assigned him, it may be his fortune to encounter unnumbered difficulties. He may have to endure unpopularity by offending recognised maxims and modes of action, by violating deep-seated prejudices, by exposing the hollowness of hypocrisy, by inveighing against the wickedness of those in whose hands power, and rank, and influence are lodged, and he may seem to himself singlehanded in the fight. The sympathy of friends may be cold and infrequent, opponents may rise up on every side: scorn, and ridicule, and contempt may be his

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portion; his equals or inferiors may outstrip him in the race for worldly advancement. The man may faint under the weight of opposition and apparent failure. He may be ready to abandon the thankless enterprise. He may be tempted to say with Elijah, Let me die, for I am not better than my fathers. And so his energies may relax, his courage may yield to the pressure of danger, he may withdraw himself from the busy scene of active life, and retire as it were into the wilderness. Oh, well for him, if in such an hour of despondency there fall upon his ear the voice which asks, What doest thou here? For what does it mean? Art thou sure of the goodness and righteousness of thy cause? dost thou believe it to be committed to thee as a call from God? Then be not weary of well-doing. What doest thou here in despair, in inactivity, in unavailing complaints? Not here, but in the thick of the battle is thy place, where thou must strive for the truth, if need be, unto death. Leave to God the issue of events, it is thy duty to do His will unto the end. Often, alike in the study of history, and in the experience of our own daily life, do we all need to be reminded that success is not the measure of truth. It was a divine speaker who denounced woe upon us when all men speak well of us. Not by popularity, not by immediate outward triumph, not by the rapid prevalence of truth and right will the true servant of God look to be upheld, but by the assurance that God will in the ultimate working out of His providential government make the cause of truth and justice, which is His own cause, to prevail, if we manfully fulfil our allotted task in forwarding it. We may not always expect to see the prosperity of our own handiwork, it may be reserved for our children and successors to see God's glory openly vindicated. It will be enough for us to find comfort in such a consolatory message as came to a prophet later than Elijah: 'Go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.' Does not history tell us of many a hero in the spiritual world who has had to die in order that the fruit of his labours may appear? Many a man who in his lifetime was hated, and scorned, and persecuted, has become in after generations a household word for greatness, and nobleness, and self-devotion to the service of God. Tell over in memory the glorious catalogue of martyrs, and confessors, and reformers, and philanthropists, and you will see that they have vanquished the world by opposing it. Why should they who have God and the right on their side be afraid of the power of men? Strong in the might of God's approval and the advocacy of a righteous cause, they may remain dauntless when all seems against them. In moments of hesitation and meditated withdrawal, they will not shut their ears to a voice which calls to them, as it did to Elijah, Go, return on thy way, fulfil thy mission. And

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they may find comfort in the thought that their labour is not always so fruitless in their own day as they imagine. Elijah thought that he was the only worshipper of the true God left in Israel; but he was told that there were yet seven thousand who remained as an elect company of faithful souls, who may have been upheld by his own steadfastness and sturdy protests against idolatry. In like manner we are warranted by experience in believing that many a Christian prophet and teacher who fears that his toil has had little reward, and laments over heedless listeners and hearts apparently unsubdued to the obedience of the faith, will find in after years, perhaps amongst widely different scenes, that all unknown to him the seed has sprung up and taken root in many a heart: he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. He may well be content to sow in tears, and hereafter reap in joy.

W. INCE.

The Dry Brook.

And it came to pass, after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land. 1 KINGS xvii. 9.

THIS is a part of the story of the education of Elijah. Elijah had come over out of Gilead upon an errand from the Lord God Almighty. The people of Israel had fallen into base idolatry. They had made a spiritual rebellion. They had dethroned God. And Elijah came to bring them back into allegiance. 'And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.' That was Elijah's message. That was the beginning of his mission. And when he had said that, when he had brought that word from the living God to the rebellious king, he went away and hid himself beside this brook. And then God began to make him ready for the next part of his great work. God went on educating Elijah.

All the land over, God was teaching terrible lessons out of the dry brooks. Everybody was in Elijah's class. Day after day, till the weeks grew into months, the sky glowed like a furnace, and the earth was parched into hot dust, and all the green things in the fields withered, and all living creatures went athirst and hungry. There was one word in every heart, and that word was 'famine.' Everything else was forgotten. Everybody prayed for rain.

The first thing, if you are to teach anybody, is to get attention. Even God must have attention. And sometimes it takes a strange sight, indeed sometimes it takes a tragedy or a famine, to get men to look in God's direction, and to listen to His voice. It did here.

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These people were wholly given over to the secular side of life. They were all the time looking down, and never up. We read about the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, and about temples and groves of Baal and Ashtaroth at Samaria and Jezreel, and all that old life seems far away, and foreign, and obsolete, and altogether out of relation with the life we live to-day. But human nature does not greatly change. Names change, but the facts which lie behind them continue. Languages, customs, skies change; the centre of the world moves from one land to another; outwardly there is absolute revolution, everything is different: Dan and Bethel, Samaria and Jezreel, fall into ruins, and New York and Philadelphia, Pittsburg and Chicago, take their places; and Baal and Ashtaroth are dead. But men and women meet the same temptations still and fall into the same sins. The devil wears a different dress; that is about the only difference.

I. This is one of the benedictions of disaster: that it sets us face to face with the realities of life. We come into an irresistible recognition of the fact that there is something more valuable than money, and more precious than pleasure. Day by day we are busy doing our day's work, occupied with the small interests which crowd our time, set upon transitory purposes, taken up with matters of the moment. And these things seem the only realities there are. God is out of sight and out of mind. Heaven and hell are theological expressions. Prayer is of no practical value. But we can put our hand on the round face of the dollar. We can be absolutely sure of the existence of a dollar. That, anyhow, is real.

And then comes trouble. And what a change that makes! What a reversal of all our valuations! Can money help us? Can society console us? O Baal, hear us! But there is no voice, nor any that answers. Baal is silent; Ashtaroth is silent. And here is the drought and the famine, and the brook is dried up because there is no rain in the land. Then we begin to think. And we remember God. And we change the emphasis of our life, and put it in a better place. And the dry brook teaches the lesson which it taught in Ahab's day, the lesson of the supremacy of God, the lesson of the infinite seriousness of life.

II. But Elijah knew that lesson. There was no need to teach that to Elijah. Let the other brooks dry up; but this brook Cherith at Elijah's feet, surely God will keep that full of water. Morning and evening come the ravens, bringing breakfast and supper to the hungry prophet, and he drinks the water of the brook. God is taking care of Elijah. The hot sun glares out of the sky, but the deep valley is in the shadow. The famine tightens its hold upon the starving people, but Elijah neither thirsts nor hungers. And he paces up and down

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in his solitary valley, safe and satisfied, and rejoices, like Jonah, to imagine the fearful execution of the sentence of the indignant God.

But by and by the heat begins to creep down into the pleasant valley; little by little the water in the brook grows less. The days pass; the anxious prophet watches; at last, 'after a while,' the brook dries up. And the drought touches Elijah.

Now here is one of the hardest things to understand in the hard problem of pain. I mean this strange impartiality. If the brook had dried up in front of Ahab's palace, that would have been right. We could see plainly enough what that was for. But when the brook dries up at the feet of the only good man in the whole country, that is quite a different matter. 'There was no rain in the land,' and that affected Elijah's brook just as it affected Ahab's. Sometimes there is a pestilence in the land, and the saint suffers like the sinner. All the time there is trouble in the land, of one sort or another, and the trouble touches the good just as it touches the bad. There is no difference. And we wonder why. No doubt but Elijah, standing on the bank of the dry brook, wondered why.

We can see why in Elijah's case. The dry brook taught Elijah the lesson of fellowship.

There he sat apart in his pleasant valley, and all the world about him was full of trouble. It is not likely that he greatly cared. He was a stern man, a preacher of the indignation of an offended God. It may even have given him a certain fierce joy to think of all that misery. These people had sinned, and now they were getting properly punished; and Elijah was glad of it. And he needed to be taught better than that. And so the dry brook brought him, first of all, out of his satisfied seclusion. He had to leave that pleasant valley.

Out goes Elijah into the suffering world. Hungry and thirsty he takes his journey across the country. He knows now what starvation means. A great pity begins to take possession of his heart. He thinks now about that great famine in quite another way, and wants it ended. And presently he is standing on the top of Carmel, and looking up into the hot sky, and praying God for rain.

It is essential that whoever would be a helper of men must first have fellowship with men. He must go out among them and know them. He cannot stay apart in any pleasant seclusion, having no experience of the hunger and thirst which devour the life of man; he must himself bear our sicknesses and carry our sorrows. We must first love him before he can be of help to us. And we can love him only when he first loves us. Christ stands supreme in our affection because He came out among us, and touched our hands with His

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hands, and did not in any way hold Himself aloof even from sinners. And because He was tempted, He became our helper in temptation. Because He suffered with us He becomes our Saviour.

The brook dries up, and we begin to understand what other people suffer. And so we begin to be able to help them. There is that blessing in pain and trouble, anyhow, that it gives sympathy, and fellowship, and understanding. It sends us out of the pleasant valley into the world where God needs us for His work.

The dry brook taught Ahab the existence of God; but it taught Elijah the existence of man.

GEORGE HODGES.

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

Our Power to Help or Harm Religion.

Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. S. MATTHEW xxiii. 13.



WE cannot get the full force of these words of Jesus unless we remember that they were spoken to those who called themselves, and who in some true sense were, religious men. He was speaking to the Pharisees. And the Pharisees were the distinctly and peculiarly religious people of Jerusalem. When Jesus came then to Jerusalem, and through that great religious city wanted to make His entrance into the life of the world, it was not strange that He gave the Pharisees, as the religious people of the religious city, the chance to be the door by which His entrance might be made. And when they failed Him, when with their bigotry, and narrowness, and pride they shut Him out and persecuted Him, it was not strange that He rebuked them with especial indignation. They were hindering His work, not merely as any man might have hindered it, but also in a special way in which none but religious men, none but recognised religious leaders, could have hindered it. They were shutting Him out not merely as any part of the wall might shut a man out, by mere passive obstinacy and hardness, but as only a door can shut a man out, by a bolt deliberately drawn across the leaves. On the other hand, because they were the religious door, He had a right to expect an admission through them which He could not expect at any other point of the long wall. Therefore it was that a peculiar dis-

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appointment and a more passionate rebuke was in the words of Jesus when He upbraided the Pharisees than when He lamented the general hardness of the people's heart. It was His sorrow and indignation over that hindrance which none except religious people had it in their power to put in the way of His work.

The words of Christ suggest one truth which evidently lies at the root of the whole subject, which is that every hindrance which any Christian puts in the way of other men's becoming Christians is associated with an imperfection in his own Christian life. Jesus says to the Pharisees, 'Ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.' We are sometimes haunted and distressed by the thought of men thoroughly and purely Christians who yet by some mere accident of their character throw obstacles in the way of their fellow-men. 'A man may be everything that he ought to be,' we say, 'his life may be as bright and straight as a sunbeam, and yet in this twisted world he will do harm. An angel himself walking our streets would meet some men so perverse that the sight of his glory would turn them away from the angelic life.' There is some truth in that, no doubt, but far less than we are apt to suppose. Indeed, there is so little truth in it, I think, that we may practically disregard it. He would be safe enough, I think, who, with the power to live a perfect life, should go upon his way, living that life without dreading or even guarding against the misconceptions that men might form about him, and the mischief that he might do. The perfect life must bear ultimately witness of itself, and correct unconsciously the mischief which it unconsciously may do. But, at any rate, it is of imperfect lives that Christ is speaking to the Pharisees, and their imperfection and the mischief which they do belong together. It is the men who go not in themselves to the kingdom of God who hinder the other men who are entering from going in. And so when we set ourselves to study, as I want to do to-day, the reasons why our Christianity does not make Christians all around us, it is to the imperfection of our own Christianity that we must look. No doubt you and I might be shining and spotless in our faith, and yet men would stand around us unmoved and unconvinced. They would keep still their free power of choice. But now we are not shining, we are not spotless. We not merely fail to win our brethren to our faith, we put obstacles in their way, and make it harder for them to be Christians, and we do this because our own Christianity is poor. Let us try in all earnestness to see what some of the faults and reasons of its failures are.

I. I mention, then, first the look of unreasonableness which much of the way in which Christians deal with Christianity gives to their faith in the eyes of their fellow-men. Often it is done with the very

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best intention, often it is a mere effort to preserve the sacredness, the dignity, the awfulness of our religion; but I am sure that many of you will recognise the thing I mean when I say that the Christian faith is made by many Christians to seem fantastic and unreasonable, something wholly distinct and apart from, and even contradictory to, the ordinary laws of thought and life, something that cannot be understood except by a special initiation and the use of wholly different faculties besides those which men use on other things. I think the surprise of many a simple earnest soul, when at last it finds its way to Christ, is at the wonderful openness of that path which men have somehow made to seem so difficult and shut. Many a teacher who has deliberately and elaborately made the Christian faith unreasonable, has found for the first time how sweetly simple and reasonable it was, as he has seen the child or disciple whom he was trying to train in all his own poor subtleties, some day, with a revelation direct from God, drawn past him and all that he was trying to elaborate, into the heart of Christ, where it had been simply shown to him that he belonged.

II. The next defect in a religion which hinders other men from being religious, is the lack of connection that there often is between our faith and the facts, the evident facts and duties, of our daily life. The facts and duties of life are hard but precious tests of the unseen life of character which lies behind them. No man but the captain of the ship can know what the captain is doing as he sits in his still cabin and studies out his course, but every passenger knows it when the misguided ship strikes upon the rocks. Men find their entrance into ideas mainly through the gateway of the conduct of the men who hold those ideas already. The only way by which it is possible that your eyesight should climb to the star in the sky, is up the ladder of the starlight which the star shines down to you. Let there seem to be starlight, and your eye will find a star where all is vacancy. Let the stream of starlight be broken, and the brightest star will burn unseen. The anger of the Christian father, the frivolousness of the Christian mother, the selfishness of the Christian brother or sister, the fraud of the Christian merchant, the uncleanness of the man who is the disciple of the pure Christ, these are great blocks laid right across the path of children and of childlike souls that are coming to Christ. It is a terrible responsibility. Evidently it is a responsibility which cannot be met save as we ourselves 'go in' to that deepest region of the Christian consecration where faith and life perfectly correspond.

III. I mention next the lack of sympathy with the life and activity of men into which some Christians seem to be thrown by their Christian faith. It is an old charge, and it is not so largely true as the

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men who have constantly made it would have us think. But still there is truth in it, of which the men who are trying to be Christians, and to make other men Christians, ought to take heed. There is an essential defect in every Christian's experience of Christ which does not make him care more for the occupations of even the most secular and irreligious of his fellow-men, and strive more to get at whatever there may be good in their hearts and souls.

IV. Another of the dangers of Christians is lest they lose the essential loftiness of the Christian life, and make it seem to other men a sordid and unworthy thing. What the world needs from Christian men to-day is not renewed assurance that Christianity is easy, and economical, and safe, but a great outburst of Christian zeal which shall throw itself into the work and life of Christ, and, without asking whether it be hard or easy, whether it be safe or dangerous, shall only follow Him with true love whithersoever He goes.

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

The Mission of Elijah.

Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. MALACHI iv. 5, 6.

A STRANGE and weird figure is this of the prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, suddenly projected on the page of history without a word of preliminary notice. 'He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins,' somewhat like one who, many generations after him, came with a similar mission, and almost in his name. He was an unique personage, and he had an unique mission. There had been prophets before, Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Shemaiah, Ahijah, and others, but Elijah is as of a new order; he covers a larger space; he speaks and acts with greater authority; he became a type of the man of God, speaking to men as the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. John the Baptist, I have said, was one of his spiritual successors, and his greatest; Athanasius, perhaps, was another, and Martin Luther, and perhaps John Wesley; or, at least these latter have been like Elisha, catching up his mantle and being baptized with a portion of his spirit. They have been the men who have accomplished the great moral and spiritual revolutions of the world, each according to the needs of his age, and with weapon suited to the need. Rough, earnest, strong-willed men most of them; not given to mince their words or to stand upon courtesies; but they have been the men to keep alive the flame of religion to prevent its dying out.

I. The age of prophets, at least of Elijahs of the old type, has

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passed away. Yet, though no Elijah, there may be an Elisha; though not an Isaiah, yet a Malachi. 'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son,' said Amos to the priest of Bethel, who forbade his prophesying any more in the court of the king. 'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son. The Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.' S. Paul tells us that prophecy is the highest gift bestowed by Christ upon His Church, and it is certain that all we who feel that our call is to proclaim God's truth to man may well pray to be endowed with a portion of it. 'Desire spiritual gifts,' says S. Paul, 'but rather that ye may prophesy.' Whatever spiritual gifts may have been necessary or profitable to the Church in other times, I am persuaded that the gift of prophecy is the most necessary and profitable now. 'Christ,' says the great Apostle, 'sent me not to baptize,' others with lower gifts could do that, and do it effectually. 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel,' and 'I preached it,' he adds, 'not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' Men have felt the power, and acknowledged the teaching. Their listening to him was the Apostle's highest credential. 'The seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord.' Just as in former generations they had felt the difference between the teaching of the Scribes and that of the Galilean Peasant—for He seemed no more in their eyes—who taught as one having authority, and of whom some said, 'Never man spake like this man,' so men felt the difference between a Paul and a Philetus, between a John and a Diotrephes. A man may well pray for a portion of this power, and for grace to use it in the noblest cause. It is not eloquence, it is not popularity, it is not the power of attracting a crowd; it is something, impalpable but most real, when men bend their wills, and hearts, and consciences before uttered truth, and feel that this is indeed 'the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls.'

This afternoon, on my way back from the East of London, I walked along the Commercial Road, and through the thronged thoroughfares of Whitechapel and Aldgate. I saw humanity there in many forms, few of them lovely. There was the street trader driving his profitable trade; there were hundreds roaming to and fro without an apparent object, and who had no Sunday clothes; there was the shameless harlot—and who made that woman shameless?—there was the deadly spirit-vault, with its bar crowded with young and old men and women, asking for poison from end to end. My wife was with me, and she turned to me and said, 'Well, this is sadder than anything we have ever seen in Manchester'; and I thought, Can science or philosophy ever heal these things? Nay,

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my thought was even sadder than that; for I said to myself, 'We have let this evil grow and gain such dimensions that can even Christianity, such as we know it, and such as we have allowed it to become, can even Christianity heal it? Could Sodom, could Egypt, "the city in which our Lord was also crucified," have ever shown sadder, more despairing scenes than these?' I am waiting to hear what the new philosophy has to say to these social facts, and still more anxiously to hear what it means to do with them. 'Oh,' you say, with a jaunty air, 'we will clear out these rookeries. The law has been passed long ago, and if our municipalities did their duty, this state of things would have long since been mended.' But these were not rookeries. The ways were spacious. I passed several blocks of model lodging-houses; church towers, and spires, and chapel roofs could be seen rising everywhere; the spirit-vaults were of the brightest and most attractive, and yet here, in the midst of these things, was a population upon whom some remedial agencies are urgently needed to be brought to bear. Indeed, even science and philosophy are hardly safe among such surroundings. 'A republic does not need chemists,' said a French terrorist, and sent Lavoisier to the guillotine. Oh for prophets, I thought, to guide these sheep, wandering as without a shepherd; to rouse the slumbering hope; to kindle the higher motive; to put the worthier aim in and before the heart of each! For each heart, however debased, is still human, and, more than that, has been made in the very image of God. It is the prophet with his large free heart that is needed, not the sacerdotal exclusionist jealously guarding his supposed special prerogatives, a heart as large as that of Moses when he rebuked Joshua's ill-timed zeal for his honour with the memorable words, 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them.' At such a time, even if we like not their methods, we dare not rebuke or try to hinder any who are working miracles or casting out devils in Christ's name; surely they are for Christ and not against Him. Instead of finding fault with others, let us bestir ourselves; too long the Church seems as though she had been sleeping beside the crater of a volcano. If we would not have the Lord come and smite the earth with a curse, let us see whether by Christian hands and Christian hearts something cannot be done to arrest the moral devastation of society. And if we come upon the field too late, and if the enemy come on too fast and too strong, and so the battle go against us, at least let us fall with our faces towards the foe, and with the spiritual weapons of warfare in our hands. It is something even to have fought in Christ's name and for Christ's cause, and even in this nineteenth century in the noble army of martyrs yet there is room.

J. FRASER.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY

Law and Christian Morality.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.
GALATIANS iii. 24.

I. **F**IRST let us see what the words of the text mean. 'The law became our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.' If you will turn to the Revised Version, you will see that for the word 'schoolmaster' is substituted the word 'tutor'; but neither schoolmaster nor tutor expresses the meaning of the original Greek word of S. Paul, *παιδαγωγός*; and indeed there is no English word which does. The *παιδαγωγός* was the slave who, in ancient Athens, led boys to school, and, slave though he was, he was generally an experienced and honoured slave, and to him was intrusted the care, the discipline, the moral guardianship of the boys of the family. Now the uses of the moral law are exactly analogous to this. Our life is but the childhood of our eternity, the school-days preparatory to the immortal years beyond; and to the law, as to a ruler, stern yet beneficent, has been intrusted by God the discipline of our souls until we have been built up into Christ. When that is done, the end of life is attained; then love is an unerring light and joy its own security; then the 'Thou shalt' of the law has melted into the rapturous 'I ought, I can, I will,' of the disciplined character and of perfect love. Now, as the slave who led boys to school in ancient Greece had to be stern and watchful for the sake of the boys themselves, so too is God's law, which comes to us with the mighty sanction, 'God spake these words and said.'

II. The Ten Commandments were never meant to be taken only in the letter. Every one of them was meant to be positive as well as negative. In every Thou shalt not was included the opposite, Thou shalt. We see, again, that in each command there was an all-inclusive comprehensiveness intended to cover every cognate duty; so that, for instance, the Seventh Commandment is a prohibition of drunkenness, impurity, and every form of sensual sin, and the Sixth Commandment prohibits pride and malice, and every form of mental passion. We see thirdly from Christ's teaching, that in God's intention, the Ten Commandments were meant to 'pierce even to the dividing of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow, sharper than any two-edged sword, and quick to discern the thoughts of every heart.' Now, these truths are involved in the actual structure of the Ten Commandments as they are, though we should never have learnt it if Christ had not taught it to us.

1. For, first observe, there is no self in them; every root of self-

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ishness is utterly excluded from them. Now to most men and women self is everything. Their whole life is a room lined with looking-glasses presenting to them in all directions, and at every glance, innumerable reflections and multiplications of their own petty and worthless selves. With boundless self-importance, as though the world was made for them, and everybody was looking at them, and everybody was thinking of them, they make themselves, their own low selves, the whole. Like the haughty and insolent lady of ancient Rome, they would welcome even a pestilence if it made more room for themselves in the crowded streets. They would sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes. They would rejoice to make their fortune out of some accursed source of gain, no matter how many souls were tempted, or even ruined by it. They would break up the very universe if out of it they could make a comfortable footstool for themselves. They are their own gods, sick worshippers of dead idols, anxious only and always to fill the palsied hand which their vile self stretches out to their sated and yet insatiable desires. Now, when 'God spake these words and said,' He laid the axe at the root of this despicable selfishness. The Ten Commandments have no single word of recognition for self. They only recognise life as worship and service, and no one could be further from their fulfilment than the self-adoring Pharisee who, content to hug his own fancied plank of safety amid the welter of universal surge, had no better word for the multitudes for whom Christ died than to say that 'this people which knoweth not the law'—by which he only meant that they paid no attention to his own trumpety practices and opinions—'these people,' he said, 'are accursed.' But the Ten Commandments obliterate selfishness altogether, and regarding even temperance, soberness, and chastity, which are included in the Seventh Commandment, as part of a man's general duty to God and the world, recognise all human obligations as involved in man's love and worship of his Creator, and in man's love and service to his fellow-man.

2. And notice further, that the Ten Commandments themselves imply their own extension from the acts of the body to the thoughts of the heart, for alike the first and the last Commandment forbid nothing more or less than an evil thought. And herein this code bears conspicuous testimony to its own divine origin. Search all the codes of the nations through in every age since the world began, and not in one of them will you find a single law which forbids an evil thought, like 'Thou shalt not covet.' Why is this? Because human law only forbids that of which it takes cognisance. Human law can take no cognisance of the thoughts of the heart, but God, when He gives a law, can take such cognisance; 'naked and open to Him are the secret thoughts of your hearts'; 'He trieth the very

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reins of the heart.' The divine code therefore proves its divine origin by forbidding the crime of guilty thoughts which are to human judgment impalpable.

III. If, then, the law, as God's honoured slave, has led us to Christ's school for instruction, we are now in a position to understand more clearly what those Ten Commandments mean. We shall see that, as the first table teaches us our duty towards God and the second our duty towards our neighbour, so, midway between the two, stands on the first table the solemn—and, in this age, the much neglected—law of duty to our parents and to all those in authority, because almost every sin has its root in the insolence of self-assertion; and all just rulers, whether our parents or others, wield over us a power of more than merely human sanction. We see, further, that the Commandments on the two tables advance in reverse order. The First and Second Commandments forbid sin against God in thought, the Third in word, the Fourth in deed; and on the second table the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth forbid sins against our neighbour in deed, the Ninth in word, the Tenth in thought. So that all the first table runs in the order of thoughts, words, deeds; the second table runs in the order of deeds, words, thoughts, so as to begin and end the Ten Commandments with the prohibition of evil thoughts. And why is this? It is to emphasise that awful truth which I have set before you, that men are always guilty in thought before they are guilty in deed, and that God forbids the thoughts of the heart, which, unless we are watchful, are 'only evil continually.'

DEAN FARRAR.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

Pharisaism. PHARISAISM is a religious sin. No one but a religious person can be a true Pharisee. He is not necessarily a hypocrite. S. LUKE xviii. 9. S. Paul was a Pharisee, never a hypocrite.

Vision of Christ. HE came to me. He was not at all like the pictures of the saints; He was pale, worn, and thin, as though the fight was not yet half over—but through this pale and worn look shone infinite power, and undying love, and unquenchable resolve. . . . When He came to me, He stopped: 'Ah!' He said, 'is it thou? What doest thou here? Knowest thou not that thou art Mine? Thrice Mine—Mine centuries ago, when I hung upon the Cross on Calvary for such as thou; Mine years ago, when thou camest a little child to the font; Mine once again, when forfeit by

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every law, thou wast given over to Me by one who is a servant and a friend of Mine. Surely I will repay ! ' A healing sense of help and comfort, like the gentle dew, visited the weary heart. . . . And He passed on ; but among ten thousand times ten thousand I should know Him ; and amid the tumult of a universe, I should hear the faintest whisper of His voice.

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Scriptures Proper to the Day.

EPISTLE,		2 CORINTHIANS III. 4-9.
GOSPEL,		S. MARK VII. 31-37.
FIRST MORNING LESSON,		1 KINGS XXII. TO VER. 41.
FIRST EVENING LESSON,		2 KINGS II. TO VER. 16 OR 2 KINGS IV. VER. 8 TO VER. 33.
SECOND LESSONS,		ORDINARY.

I. COMPLETE SERMON

Need for Divine Enlightenment and Guidance.

Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord's besides, that we might inquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. 1 KINGS xxii. 6-8,



AST Sunday we were face to face with Elijah and more remotely with Ahab, king of Israel, while each was still in the midst of his career; the king obeying the behests of his idolatrous wife, and persecuting the servants of God; the prophet encountering the idol system in all its strength, vanquishing it, seeing the fruits of his victory fade away before his very eyes, retiring in deep despondency into the desert, and yet pledging himself to the future by the call of his great successor, Elisha. But all human careers, even those

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which seem the greatest, are quickly spent ; and to-day, in both cases, we have reached the close. In the first lesson of this afternoon, you have listened to the account of the great prophet's triumphant ascent by a whirlwind into heaven. In this morning's lesson, the weak and wicked monarch has encountered his predestined doom ; and it is to the circumstances which immediately preceded the tragedy at Ramoth-gilead that I invite your attention.

Now, in order to thoroughly understand the historical setting of this conversation between Ahab and Jehoshaphat, which is given in the text, it is necessary to recall events that had occurred three years before this fatal expedition to take Ramoth-gilead. The power of Ben-hadad, king of Syria—at that period in the history of the kingdom of Israel, by far its most formidable enemy, for as yet Assyria, and still more Babylon, had not appeared upon the Mediterranean, the power of Ben-hadad had been broken, by a double, and, in the last case, by a decisive defeat. At the head of an army commanded by thirty-two vassal kings, Ben-hadad had insolently demanded the surrender of Ahab's wealth and possessions, even of his wives and children ; and when his demand was pressed a second time in more peremptory terms, Ahab, in his weakness, resisted. Ben-hadad threatened that he would reduce the city of Samaria to ashes by so numerous an army that its very rubbish should scarcely suffice for each one of his soldiers to fill his hand ; and to prove his contempt for the power of the Israelites, he gave orders for the attack to be made upon the city, whilst he himself was engaged in a mid-day carousal in his pavilion with his subject kings and his leading officers. The whole body of fighting Israelites was but seven thousand men—the exact number observe, of those who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But the victory over Ben-hadad—and to this the sacred writer calls special attention—was really won by only two hundred and thirty-two servants of the provincial governor's, men comparatively unarmed and without military training, who had come to seek shelter and safety in those troublous times within the walls of Samaria. Ben-hadad fled on horseback, while the king of Israel, at the head of his troops, completely defeated the besieging army. But hoping to retrieve his fortunes, and to recover his lost ascendancy, Ben-hadad entered on a fresh campaign with the new year. His advisers had assured him that the God of Israel was only 'a hill God,' whose power did not really extend to the plains, and that, therefore, a new campaign in the valley of Esdraelon might have a very different result from the last. They also recommended Ben-hadad to raise his army to its former numbers, and to remove the vassal kings and his chief officers, who were suspected of not having done their duty, from their positions of command. After taking these measures, Ben-hadad

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advanced to the siege of Aphek, in the vale of Esdraelon. The army of Israel, says the sacred writer, looked like two miserable flocks of goats, in contrast to the Syrian host, which filled the land with its vast levies; and yet a second time, Ahab was victorious. One hundred thousand fighting men fell in one day, twenty-seven thousand were destroyed by the fall of the walls of Aphek, and Ben-hadad, now a captive and trembling for his life, faithfully and thankfully promised, if his life might only be spared, to allow the Israelites a quarter for their bazaars in the streets of Damascus, and to restore all the cities which had been won from Israel in the campaigns against Ahab's father, Omri. Upon the faith of these terms Ben-hadad was released, and a peace of three years followed.

Now, it was in reference to this treaty, at the expiration of the three years, that Ahab proposed to Jehoshaphat their making a joint expedition with a view of taking the city of Ramoth-gilead, which ought to have been surrendered with the rest, but which had been persistently held by the Syrians, notwithstanding the promise of Ben-hadad. Ahab had married his daughter to Jehoshaphat's son, and Jehoshaphat was on a visit at the court of Samaria, so that everything was favourable, putting religious interests out of the question, for the two kings to co-operate against Ramoth-gilead. Certainly, too, Ahab appeared to have natural justice on his side in his wish to recover Ramoth-gilead; Ben-hadad having promised to surrender it, and by that promise having saved his life. Jehoshaphat had, at first, no hesitation in placing the whole force of the kingdom of Judah at the king of Israel's disposal for such an object. 'I am,' he said, 'as thou art; my people as thy people; my horses as thy horses.'

As against Ben-hadad, then, Ahab was in the right when he sought to recover Ramoth-gilead. But, there was another with whom he had to reckon, he had to reckon with God. Face to face with God, Ahab's real position was, at this period of his life, that of a condemned criminal; and he, therefore, was not in a moral position to represent and to act on behalf of the rights of Israel. Not to speak of the misery which he had brought upon his country by his encouragement of Phœnician idolatry, he had placed himself under a ban by sparing, from a purely selfish motive, the life of Ben-hadad, which, like that of Agag, the Amalekite in an earlier age, could not be spared without injury to the theocracy. As he returned from his great victory, he met the prophet of the Lord, who, after attracting his attention by a symbolical action characteristic of the time, had announced his sentence: 'Thus saith the Lord, because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.' Then came, not long after, the more serious matter of Naboth's vine-

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yard, in which, at the instigation, and with the assistance of his wicked wife, Ahab had committed a judicial murder of singular atrocity, in order that he might improve his property. Then for the last time, in the garden of the murdered man, Elijah had met Ahab, had foretold the extinction of his house, and the circumstances of his end. It was in the character of a herald of the divine justice, placed, like Jeremiah, whom the Lord set over the nations and over the kingdoms, 'to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, as well as to build and to plant,' that Elijah thus passed sentence of death upon the king of Israel. Ahab's blood was to be licked up by the hungry dogs in the public square, where they had just licked up Naboth's. Ahab's subsequent sorrow led, indeed, to a modification of his sentence; his house was not to be extinguished absolutely with himself; but on himself, at the time of which we are speaking, the sentence of God's wrath, uttered by His prophet, lay in all its awful power.

These dreadful predictions must, from time to time, have rung, we should think, in the ears of Ahab. They would have been a matter of common conversation in Judah and Benjamin, not less than in Israel. They must have been also familiar to Jehoshaphat. For a while, indeed, Ahab's life passed quietly in the midst of a numerous family, and surrounded by a brilliant court. Strengthened, moreover, in the good opinion of his subjects by his recent military successes, and by his alliance with the powerful and enterprising king of Judah, Ahab would, no doubt, have succeeded in escaping, at least to a great extent, from his legitimate fears. But if, when after the lapse of time, Ahab proposed the joint expedition to Ramoth-gilead, his own faith in the words of the prophet did not suggest some reason for hesitation, Jehoshaphat, at least, was too prudent not to insist upon inquiry, at the hands of some accredited organ of the mind of God, into the wisdom of the expedition. Jehoshaphat, it is true, had consented to co-operate with Ahab, but before he set out he wished to know what God was thinking, what God was willing, about the proposed course, if he possibly could.

I. Let us pause for a moment, if only to note here a great duty in all men who really believe in God's providential care and love, the duty of ascertaining, so far as we can, what He would wish, what He would approve and disapprove, before we undertake any considerable work, or enter upon any new course in life. For it is certain that whatever we undertake in things great or small, in things spiritual, or temporal, He is watching us; He is passing judgment of some sort upon us; and He will one day call us to account for our actions. It is, at least, practical for us to think of this now. We may not, indeed, have prophets at hand who see visions in the heavens, unveiling as did the

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vision of Micaiah the inmost machinery of the divine government. God deals with His people in one way at one period, in another at a later one. But, by way of compensation, we do know more of the principles of His government than did the Israelites in the days of Ahab. We know more of His power, much more of His love, and more of His will, as they bear upon the details of human life. We can, therefore, in the great majority of cases, decide for ourselves the question of going up to Ramoth-gilead. We can always, and should always apply to God in prayer for enlightenment and guidance by His Holy Spirit within the soul through the course of events without it. Our prayer should be, 'Lead me forth in Thy truth, and learn me, for Thou art the God of my salvation.' For, most assuredly, God will take His own way of teaching us His will, and not seldom, now as of old, is that will best learnt from some friend whose moral and religious character, whose balanced judgment, whose ready sympathies, we can really trust; who will look at our case in a spirit of perfect goodwill, and yet with the high impartiality of perfect independence. Everything depends in a case of this kind on this question, Who is to be consulted? The gravest issues, as in Ahab's case, may hang upon the answer to that question. Ahab actually applied to four hundred prophets who were likely, he thought, by their numbers and position, to satisfy the scruples of Jehoshaphat, and to fortify the resolution at which he had arrived. But who were those prophets? Prophets of whom? The question has been eagerly debated among Biblical scholars. The opinion that they were the prophets of the Phœnician deities, Astarte or Baal, prophets who had not appeared upon Carmel and who had, therefore, escaped the doom of their colleagues, is inconsistent with the statement that Ahab was seeking to know the word of Jehovah at their hands. On the other hand, it is plain from Jehoshaphat's second demand that they were not legitimate prophets of the Lord, in the sense in which Elijah and the pupils of the prophetic schools were. They would, therefore, seem to have been prophets of Jehovah, whom they worshipped, illegally under the symbol of a calf; an order of men who had arisen in the reign of Jeroboam, and who practised prophesying as a profession, without any positive call from God, and who, at the present time, when the Phœnician idolatry had fallen into something like discredit, were in the pay, or at least under the influence, of the court of Samaria.

It must have been an extraordinary sight which was witnessed outside the principal gate of Samaria on that eventful day. Upon a platform erected a little in advance of the gate, were raised two thrones, upon which, in full regal splendour, sat the now intimately allied monarchs of Judah and of Israel, while the four hundred prophets, one after another, prophesied before them. In the dress, and

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with much of the manner of modern Eastern dervishes, one after another, each took up his parable, but the refrain of each was ever the same: 'Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.' One prophet there was, indeed, more intrepid and enterprising than the rest, Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, who particularly distinguished himself among the four hundred. He practically illustrated his prophecy by a dramatic or symbolic action to render it more impressive. He made horns of iron, that is to say spikes, in allusion to the figure employed by Moses in the vision of Joseph, which was intended to convey to the tribe of Ephraim a promise of perpetual favour; and then advancing from among the rest, towards the foot of the throne, he brandished his iron horns and cried to Ahab, 'With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou hast destroyed them.'

II. The demonstration, as a whole, was all that Ahab wanted. It was of value as a means of moulding public opinion in favour of the proposed expedition, and though he did not attach much weight to such things, it was in its way satisfactory to him. But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. Indeed Ahab and Jehoshaphat were not really aiming at the same thing. Ahab merely wanted the sanction of religion, if he could possibly get it, upon a project as to which he had already made up his mind. Jehoshaphat really wished, if he could, to know what God's will was about Ahab's project. Jehoshaphat surveyed the four hundred prophets, their numbers, their picturesqueness, their peculiar position and influence; he listened to their loud, reiterated cry—'Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper'—reiterated, as if victory could be already assured by all this exuberance of official enthusiasm. But he was not content, and he turned to ask Ahab whether there was not 'a prophet of the Lord besides, that he might inquire of him?' Ahab was annoyed at the question; although on the part of Jehoshaphat it was strictly legitimate and inevitable. Jehoshaphat naturally could not trust the prophets of Jeroboam's schism—the prophets of the calves. Ahab sullenly replied, 'There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah,' but added that he hated Micaiah because of his never prophesying good of him, but evil. Still, a chamberlain was sent to fetch Micaiah, and on the way back this courtier expressed a hope that Micaiah would feel himself at liberty to prophesy in the same sense and terms as the four hundred had done. To this Micaiah replied that his message was not a plaything which he could mould at will, that he was instructed from heaven, and that he must speak according to the terms of his instructions, 'What the Lord sayeth unto me, that will I speak.' On reaching the royal presence Micaiah was asked, as had been the others, the formal question: 'Shall we go up against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?' And he

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answered, at first in the very words of the four hundred, 'Go up, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.' There must have been something in the prophet's tone which betrayed his real mind to the heart of Ahab—something which suggested that this was not the real judgment of the prophet, but only an ironical echo of the language of the courtiers, who were guided in their pretended inspiration by purely selfish and personal considerations. Ahab's suspicions were aroused, and, angry and frightened, he adjured Micaiah to speak only the truth in the name of Jehovah; and then it was that Micaiah told how he had seen in visions Israel scattered upon the mountains of Gilead, 'as sheep without a shepherd,' and how he had heard the voice of the true King of the nations sounding from the heavens: 'These have no master: let them return every one to his home in peace,' implying that Ahab would have fallen in the contemplated attack upon Ramoth-gilead. And when Ahab attributed his prophecy to Micaiah's personal hostility to himself, Micaiah replied, by showing how the Lord had determined that Ahab, being led astray by the predictions of teachers who were inspired by the spirit of falsehood, would be lured on to the war in which he would meet his doom.

This second vision has a bearing upon a great question, upon the permission and control of evil by a good God, which is of the utmost importance. It is not within our present purpose to consider it. We can only just glance at what followed, at the indignation of Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, at Micaiah's depreciatory account of the origin of his inspirations, at the altercation which ensued between him and Micaiah, at the king's sentence upon the intrepid prophet, upon whose life and history, as the prison doors of the house of the governor of Samaria close upon him, the Bible record throws no further light.

III. Now, here let us carefully note the fact that Ahab's tragical fate was the immediate consequence of preferring his own will, backed up by the advice of the four hundred, to the revelations of Micaiah. Why Jehoshaphat, after Micaiah's prophecy, still consented to join in the expedition we do not certainly know. It was, probably, an additional illustration of that element of weakness in his character which had led him to consent originally to a marriage alliance with the house of Ahab. But Ahab, although he took his own way, was haunted by a suspicion that the imprisoned and injured Micaiah might, after all, be right. Accordingly he entered the battle in disguise that he might not attract the notice of the Syrian archers; and Jehoshaphat, who was the only soldier with royal decorations on his person, being mistaken for the king of Israel, was in consequence exposed to a charge of unusual violence, from which he was with

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difficulty rescued by his bodyguard. But Ahab's precautions were all in vain. No human contrivance can avert the execution of the divine decrees. A Syrian archer drew his bow, as the Hebrew expresses it, in his simplicity—that is to say, without any one man in particular; and he struck the king of Israel at the point where his iron breastplate joined the hanging skirt, which covered the lower part of his body. Ahab knew at once that the wound was mortal, but, that he might not dishearten his soldiers, he, with the help of his armour-bearer, stiffened himself into an upright posture before the advancing Syrians, while his ebbing life-blood gradually filled the hollow of the chariot in which he rode. Towards sunset the truth became known throughout the army of Israel; then the cry went forth, the solemn cry, 'Every man to his city, and every man to his land.' The royal chariot returned to Samaria, but the king whom it bore ceased to breathe, and it was noted how, when they washed the chariot in the public pool or conduit at Samaria, the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, at the scene and under the circumstances foretold by Elijah.

The character of Ahab's mind at this, the last crisis of his sad and eventful life, is seen in two respects; in his willingness to consult the prophets of the calves, in his prejudice against Micaiah. They are the two sides of a disposition towards religion, which, in its principle, is fundamentally one and the same, a disposition which was exhibited in all its main features by Saul, the first king of the chosen people. It is not downright contemptuous, bitter opposition; still less is it the loyalty of faith and love. It is a willingness to welcome religion, if religion will only sanction the projects, the views, the passions, the characters, of its patrons. Ahab anticipated, to a certain extent, the ideas of writers such as Hobbes and Malmesbury; writers who have been convinced that religion is a great power in human life and history, that it can be made useful in winning the minds of men to the political measures which are resolved upon by earthly governments, in making the process of government easier by reinforcing it with something like a supernatural lustre in the eyes of the multitude. Ahab had no notion of seeking the will of God for himself, with the simple intention of obeying it. He welcomed the four hundred, because he knew beforehand exactly what the four hundred would say. He knew that they were his creatures; he knew that they were not in a position to give him honestly independent advice at this most critical juncture, that in fact they would simply echo in religious language, a conclusion at which he himself had before arrived on grounds of political expediency. He followed not them, but himself. He disobeyed a voice which he could not silence, which, willingly, he would not have heard. He knew that Micaiah

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was an independent adviser, but he did not want to be told unwelcome truths, even in a matter of life and death. He took his own way, and his tragical end was the consequence of his doing so.

IV. Let us learn, hence, two lessons ; and first, an important principle of Church polity, the importance of making religious teachers, if you can, independent of those whom they have to teach. The question is a very practical one. When a new parochial district, for instance, is being laid out, and an income has to be provided for the proposed incumbent, why, it is asked, should there be any endowment? Why cannot a modern clergyman subsist upon the voluntary offerings of his flock as the Apostles did before him? I do not deny that many men can do so ; that in all ages of the Church, you will find those who inherit, along with the apostolic commission the apostolic spirit in all its fulness—men who, in S. Paul's exact sense, have learned in whatsoever state they are therewith to be content. But these are, generally speaking, men who, for the better doing of their Master's work, refuse to embarrass themselves with the cares of a family, and have no one's support to provide for as a matter of strict duty but their own. But if you resolve—and there are grave reasons to justify your resolutions—if you resolve that the mass of your clergy shall be married men, you must make up your minds either to make them independent, or to surround yourselves too often, and too certainly, with the echoes of your own inclinations and wishes with the four hundred prophets of the calves. The clergyman, who with a number of children depending upon him, has to think from the first day of the year, about the collection which will be made for him at the end of it, must be heroic indeed if he never yields to the temptation of softening down a truth which is unwelcome to his paymasters, or extenuating a fault which is notoriously popular among them. There are, of course, some of the laity in every generation who would rather have it so. They do not, they say, like too much independence on the part of the clergy. They do not want prophets of God, but exponents of their own tastes and opinions. They prefer Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, with his magnificent compliments, with his horns of iron, to Micaiah the son of Imlah, with his simple capacity saying nothing but the truth. They fear that an independent clergy will abuse their independence ; and it is, of course, impossible to deny, that at particular periods of Church history and in particular countries, this has been the case on a considerable scale. The clergy are of course not perfect, not infallible. They are not exempt from the temptation to abuse their trust ; but a man goes much more against the instincts of a healthy conscience, if he abuses it in the interest of a professional, or of a class ambition, than if he abuses it that he may feed and clothe those who are nearest and dearest to

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him. It is the laity who suffer most, much more by a dependent clergy, than do the clergy themselves. The wounds which may be left in a clerical conscience, when truth has been concealed, or sin palliated for the sake of daily bread, are terribly avenged by the self-inflicted moral and spiritual degradation of a Christian community, which voluntarily can seek in its religious teachers, not the best that it can learn the will of the All Holy, uttered in all its integrity with a fearless independence, but the mere reflection in religious language, of its own shortsightedness, of its own worldliness, in a word, of its own resolution to go up, come what may, to Ramoth-gilead.

See too, here, a lesson of religious practice. They who do not seek false teachers may yet take only so much of the true teaching as falls in with their own lower inclinations. And this is another form of the error of Ahab. They do not go so far as to consult the prophets of the calves, but they have no inclination to listen to all that Micaiah, the son of Imlah, has to say to them. This may be seen in the way in which many men read the Bible. It is not merely that they have, as the phrase is, their 'favourite books' and their 'favourite chapters.' That is intelligible, because God may most assuredly attract one soul through this part of His revelation, and another soul through another. But it is that they take no heed of the rest, while it is probable that the very portions that they never read, or which they are imprudent enough to deem of inferior, or of no importance, may be the very portions of the Bible which their particular characters need the most. They study the Sermon on the Mount; they have nothing to say to the Epistles of S. Paul. Or they study a few chapters in the Romans and Galatians; they never read, and do not like S. James. Or they do not see the use of the historical books of the Old Testament, or the enthusiasms of the Psalter, or the visions of Ezekiel, and the Apocalypse. It seems a slavery to them to follow, day by day, the settled order of the Church lessons; and yet, if they would do this, they would be in a fair way to get at the whole counsel of God, as set before them in His Holy Word, as they would almost go through the whole of the Old Testament once, and the New Testament twice, in the course of a year, and would not be in danger of omitting those parts of the sacred volume, which, though not quite so agreeable, are not on that account the less useful to themselves. In the same way, men have their favourite duties, the performance of which as they think without saying so relieves them from the performance of the rest. They would on no account break the eighth commandment or the sixth: they are less careful about the seventh and the ninth. They are alive to the importance of charity: they do not attach much value to daily prayer. They practise the social virtues: they care little about the personal virtues. They are care-

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ful to be kindly and generous in small matters: they see no harm in being grasping, even to the very verge of dishonesty, in great ones. They pay their debts regularly, but they neglect the Holy Communion. They have books, they have prophets of their own which put the Divine Will before them in a manner which consults their predilections. And in the same way men have their favourite doctrines. Micaiah may preach of the divine benevolence, but he must say very little about divine justice. He may show the social advantages of Christianity; he had better say but little of its mysteries. He may enlarge on the blessings of accepting redemption: he must say nothing of the consequence of rejecting it. If God, in short, will only say what His creature approves of, His creature will be content. But if the gospel or creed, like Micaiah's message of old, has its 'warning clauses,' so much the worse for creed or gospel, when Ahab is sitting on his throne at the gate of Samaria, and has made up his mind, come what may, to go up to Ramoth-gilead.

Our first work in our souls, the work upon which everything else depends, is to be true. To seek to know ourselves, indeed, as we are, and God, so far we can, as He is. To distrust all that, as we think, merely reflects our own wishes, to make the most of all that speaks fearlessly of and for God, about God, about ourselves. To determine that we will not less prize a knowledge of this kind because it humbles, because it disappoints, because it pains and checks us, in a thousand ways, for this knowledge is the very first step in the road to Calvary, which is the road to Paradise. To stifle, to mutilate, to debauch if we could do so, the accents of the Divine Voice is but to seal our own death-warrant. We have nothing to fear from the humiliations that the true standard of the gospel may—nay, must—inflict upon our guilty consciences, because we may rise out of, and by, these very humiliations, up to that Cross which saves us from them.

In the last contest with death, which is before each one of us, like the dying Ahab sinking down into his chariot, we shall think cheaply enough of the four hundred prophets who have charmed us here through life by a thousand organs of opinion: we shall know that after all, He who spoke by Micaiah was surely right. May He grant that in those solemn moments this knowledge may not have come too late, that we may be stayed on the Hands that were pierced for our salvation, that we may know Him whom we have, at whatever cost, believed, as the eternal reward of a faith which will then be melting into sight.

H. P. LIDDON.

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Two Ministrations, the Law and the Gospel.

For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 2 CORINTHIANS iii. 9.



WHEN Jehoshaphat, the pious king of Judah, had made alliance with Jehoram, the wicked king of Israel, they went down together to consult Elisha, the prophet of the Lord. Conscious of the dignity of his office, and not overawed by the majesty of princes, Elisha could scarcely bring himself to hold communication with one who wrought evil in the sight of the Lord. Elisha said, 'As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee nor see thee.' There is something very striking in this righteous independence. The prophet deserves the imitation, no less than the admiration, of all the servants of God, seeing that he acted on the clear, though often forgotten principle, 'Rank can bestow no nobility on vice.' We refer to this instance simply to show, that the prophet knew that there belonged to him, as a messenger from God, an authority so commanding, that even the great ones of the earth were bound to render him respect; and if occasions arose when this authority seemed questioned or despised, Elisha was prepared to assert boldly his right to take his stand on the lofty ground of a superiority derived from a divine commission. The Apostles of Christ, under the gospel dispensation, imitated in this respect the conduct of the prophet. It was thus especially, you will see, that the Apostle, who, though willing to submit to every kind of privation and wrong, so that souls might be won to the Saviour, was always determined to maintain the authority which his office conveyed. Accordingly, when false teachers had crept into the Corinthian Church, who endeavoured to commend themselves by depreciating S. Paul, this man of God asserted, with holy vehemence, the claim which he had on the respect and affections of Christians.

Thus, in the chapter from which our text is taken, he magnifies his apostleship by bringing it into juxtaposition with the office committed to Moses. He argues that there must have been a great glory about the legal dispensation, seeing that when the tables of the law were given into the hands of the lawgiver, there flashed from his face a brightness which overpowered the children of Israel. He

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then concludes, that if the dispensation itself were glorious, it must have been a glorious thing to have been intrusted with its ministration; thus claiming high honour to Moses as appointed to be the giver of the law. But if it were thus honourable to exercise a ministration which, after all, was a ministration of death, must it not be vastly more honourable to exercise a ministration which was a ministration of life? And if, therefore, glory accrued to Moses from the one ministration, ought not still greater glory to accrue to S. Paul from the other?

Such seems a fair outline of the argument of the Apostle, dispersed as it is over the whole of the chapter. But we are not so much concerned with the general drift of S. Paul's reasoning, as with the incidental statement which that reasoning led him to advance. We have, in our text, definitions of the law and the gospel, which demand the best of our attention, irrespective of the conclusions to which they conduct. The preaching of the law is defined as a ministration of condemnation, nevertheless it is glory; the preaching of the gospel as a ministration of righteousness; and this is said much more to exceed in glory. There is much material for interesting thought in these separate definitions and characteristics. Let us apply ourselves, therefore, at once to their consideration. Our first topic of discourse is, that the law was a ministration of condemnation, but nevertheless glory; we shall, then, in the second place, have to consider the gospel as a ministration of righteousness, and to see if there be not full warrant for the assertion, 'If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.'

I. Now there is, perhaps, something which, on the first mention, jars with our feelings in the fact, that it was with a perfect knowledge that man could not obey the law, that the Almighty placed him under that law as a covenant. We can readily understand, that the freest mercy might preside over the institution of that ministration which, being found to produce nothing but death, might, by the same mercy, be exchanged for another; but we do not readily understand how, with all the foreknowledge of disastrous failure, benevolence could have dictated the legal dispensation. Yet, in truth, there is no difficulty but what arises from the forgetfulness of the union between the law and the gospel. If the two systems had been altogether detached, the gospel having no connection whatsoever with the law, there would have existed great cause for wonder at God's appointing a ministration of condemnation. But when it is remembered, that the law was most strikingly introductory to the gospel, so that the covenant of works literally made way for the covenant of grace, all surprise ought to vanish, and all doubt to be removed, as

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to the institution being consistent with love. If, indeed, God had placed men under the law, and left them to sink beneath its demands, we might have found it difficult to reconcile the proceeding with His fond compassion towards the alienated and the lost. But from the earliest moment of human apostasy, God's dealing with the fallen had always a reference to the work of atonement; He looked upon the world as a redeemed world, at the very instant of its becoming rebellious! He never came forth from the majesty of His own solitude, and condescended to open an intercourse between Himself and His creatures, without bringing upon the scene—sometimes more brilliantly, and sometimes more dimly—the awful mysteries of the work of reconciliation. Whatever, then, the dispensation which, for wise ends, He might temporally institute, it was never altogether detached from Christ; but, on the contrary, there was always much in this arrangement which took for granted the suretyship of Jesus. And we hold that such was pre-eminently the case in regard of the covenant of the law. Take the moral law by itself, and it was necessarily, as we shall afterwards show you, a ministration of condemnation; yet those who lived under this ministration of death were not necessarily left to die. The law itself could work only death, but they unto whom it had been issued might nevertheless have found life. Know ye not, that whilst the legal dispensation was in the fulness of its strength, there passed many an Israelite into the kingdom of heaven; and that, long ere the dawning of that splendid day on which Christ Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law, thousands went down in peace to the grave, obtaining gratuitously the deliverance which they could never have won meritoriously? And what account do we give of this, except that the ministration, which, by itself, was one of condemnation, was so allied with another ministration, and that a ministration of acquittal, that even whilst the covenant of works was in the fulness of its strength, there lay a clear passage between earth and heaven, which might be traversed by those who could present no obedience which should approach to perfection. We carry you to the scenes of temple-worship, and whilst the high priest is laying the sin of the people on the head of the scape-goat, and the blood of victims is poured forth in typical expiation, and the cloud of incense is mounting and covering the mercy-seat, and there goes forward all that complicated business of the ceremonial institution, every tittle of which prefigured redemption—we bid you learn from the emblematical announcement—that no man was condemned because living under the ministration of condemnation; but that, even whilst the moral law was unrepealed as a covenant, no one perished under it who looked onwards to a long-promised sacrifice.

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Though the law was a ministration of condemnation, it was nevertheless glory. 'If the ministration of condemnation,' says our text, 'be glory.' The chief object of S. Paul's reasoning, as we have already intimated, was the showing that the office held by Moses, as the law-giver of Israel, was an honourable office; the brightness of his face, when he descended from the mount, was a testimony of this fact. But, forasmuch as the glory of being a minister could result only from the glory of that which was ministered, we swerve not from the Apostle's line of argument, if we consider the law itself, and not the ministration, as the subject whose glory is affirmed. And was it, then, a dispensation beaming with glory which opened up no deliverance to the wretched; which, proffering salvation on impossible conditions, 'Do this and live,' seemed to mock human impotence rather than to provide for human necessity? Was that a glorious arrangement, which, with all the show of an interposition on behalf of the fallen, could never have snatched from destruction a solitary individual, which could only have issued in the impressment of a yet deeper curse on an already depressed and groaning population? It was mainly in consequence of its own perfection that the law thus proved a minister of condemnation. Had the law been a defective law, constructed so as to be adapted to the weakness of the parties on whom it was imposed, and not to the attributes of Him from whom it proceeded, it is altogether supposable that the result might not have been the condemnation of mankind. This, we say, is supposable, though we are by no means persuaded that any law whatever could have made such allowances for human infirmity as to have warded off the issue of human condemnation. You remember that S. Paul writes to the Galatians, 'If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.' Here he certainly seems to imply, that if man could have obtained justification by any law he would have obtained it by the moral law. So that we are far from being sure that law could have been pared down to any such smallness of requirement as to let go fallen creatures, absolved and purified; rather we should be disposed to uphold the opinion, that in every case divine law would so powerfully excite the antipathies of human beings, that God could have required nothing so trifling that would not have been refused by our race. But, whatever the possibility of constructing a law which man could have obeyed, suppose it constructed, would it have been glorious? It could not have been a perfect law; for a perfect law, as we have shown you, must be a ministration of condemnation; and if not a perfect law, wherein could lie its glory? You tell me, in the fact of its being a practical and saving law, and allowing the wretched to work out deliverance from their wretchedness. Then the glory

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lies in the imperfection of the law; then it is glory that law should be constructed on the principle of mutilated justice, and compromised holiness; then it is glory that the law should make loopholes for offenders, in place of ramparts against offences; then it is glory that law should be a system of apologies for frailties, and not of resistances to evil. And call ye this glory? Call ye it glory that the law should have proved a ministration of acquittal, when you must admit that the creatures whom it absolved could have obtained no verdict but one of stern condemnation, had not God dealt with them by a law most dishonouring to Himself? No, no! this was the glory, that the law was a ministration of condemnation. We say not, it was glory that man must perish; but we do say, that it was glory that, if either man must perish or God be dishonoured, there should be a system of legislation which left indeed the human race in ruins, but wrote on the sepulchre, that God had magnified His perfections. We call this glory, we call it glory, that the moral law was the transcript of the divine mind. We call it glory, that this law displayed God as God, as that Being unto whom one moral spot on the wide surface of creation would be reason enough why He should command it indignantly into nothingness. Though it were a result worthy to be wept over by all those ranks of beings who have kept fast their allegiance, that one generation after another should appear at God's tribunal, and, tried by the moral law, be swept to destruction; yet, forasmuch as this general consignment to perdition would only exhibit the unflinching justice of the Almighty, we believe that over and above the wailings of lost men, and the lamentations of holy angels, would be heard the acknowledgment, that the law had proved its rights to the title of glory, in proving itself what it is called in our text, a ministration of condemnation.

II. But enough on S. Paul's definition of the law; let us now briefly endeavour to set before you the gospel, as a ministration of righteousness. It is, therefore, far surpassing the law in its glory. There is a kind of opposition, as it would seem, between the several points of the text; and from this opposition much of its meaning may be derived. The ministration of righteousness is set in a kind of antithesis to the ministration of condemnation. But if we had been asked to define the precise opposite to the ministration of condemnation, we should probably have spoken of a ministration of acquittal, or of a ministration of acceptance; and we think it fair to infer from this undoubted substitution of righteousness for acceptance, that S. Paul designed to point out righteousness as the cause or groundwork for acceptance. By defining the gospel as a ministration of righteousness, and setting it in opposition to a ministration of condemnation, he virtually affirms that by and through righteous-

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ness condemnation is escaped ; and forasmuch, moreover, as the very reason of the law, by a ministration of condemnation, lies in man's proved incapacity of presenting a righteousness of his own, it must certainly follow, from S. Paul's definition, that it would be by and through the righteousness of another that acceptance with God is procured. Thus we consider, that in the very terms of this definition of the gospel, lie couched the grand doctrines of the gospel. We assert of the gospel, that it is a ministration of righteousness, just because it is a system which, assuming that man can have no meritorious righteousness of his own, puts him in a position wherein he appropriates the meritorious righteousness of another. The law which had been given to man, and broken by man, must be both obeyed by man in its precepts, and satisfied by man in its penalties, otherwise there could be no pardon and no acceptance for man ; and therefore did the Son of God, as the new Head of our race, gather humanity into His own Divine Person, and obeying to the veriest tittle, and enduring to the last fraction, magnify the law, and make it honourable. He did not destroy the law, He put not aside its claims, He did not compel it to relax its requirements ; but, through the ensured aids of the Eternal Spirit, He strengthened the human nature in His own Divine Person to do all which the law demanded, and suffer all which the law denounced : and when our nature had both presented a perfect obedience, and paid the outstanding debt, it became possible that all who partake of this nature, and who will look to Christ as the great repairer of the breach, may be transferred from the dispensation of condemnation and death to another of acquittal and life. So that we bear in mind the connection which we have already asserted between the law and the gospel, and we state that the ministration of condemnation merged, as it were, into the ministration of righteousness. The law which gave us over to death, so long as we were left to obey it for ourselves, consigns us to life, when we close by faith with the suretyship of a Mediator. And we further declare of the gospel, that it is a ministration of righteousness, because therein, as the Apostle elsewhere saith, is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. We call it a ministration of righteousness, because it proposes to us the righteousness of the High Priest of our profession, as the procuring cause of our acceptance with God. It comes down upon us in all our weakness and wretchedness, even whilst we are banded in rebellion and wasted by disease. It discloses to us a method of justification ; and preaching Christ, as ' made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,' bids us throw off the raiment of corruption, and spring upwards in the garniture of immortality. In its every department it is a ministration of righteousness. The

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gospel is the mightiest display of God's righteousness. Where has God equally shown His hatred of sin, His settled determination to wring its punishment from the impenitent? It is a system, moreover, whose grand feature is the application to man of the righteousness of Christ; 'Christ is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' And, then, this gospel, while displaying a perfect righteousness which hath been wrought out for us, insists peremptorily on a righteousness which must be wrought in us by God's Spirit making our own holiness—though it can obtain nothing by way of merit—indispensably necessary by way of preparation. If, then, the gospel be the noblest exhibition of the Son's righteousness, and if its requirements from man be that righteousness which is the work of the Spirit wrought in him, then inasmuch as, surveyed under every point of view, righteousness is a characteristic of the gospel, surely you will give in your assent to the truth of the assertion, that the ministration of this gospel is a ministration of righteousness; and if the law, though a ministration of condemnation, be glory, does not the gospel, the ministration of righteousness, much more exceed in glory?

Yes, it was glory that God should issue enactments which displayed His own perfections, though they carried with them the death-warrant of the whole human race. Again, we say, there could have been no glory in a law which man could have kept; it must have been an imperfect law, and therefore a law unworthy of God to put forth. It was glory, that when it pleased the Creator to issue a code for the government of His creatures, He provided that this code should image forth to the whole intelligent universe the spotless purity of His nature, and that He was not arrested in graving Himself on the tables of stone by the thought that thus characterised, they would weigh down by their own ponderousness the children of men. It was glory that God should prove Himself holy and just, though the proof were extorted from the despair and anguish of untold myriads; but if the perfection were a thousandfold more brilliantly displayed, and if the proof were a thousandfold more energetic, if all the while a blessing and not a curse, life and not death, were ranged on the side of the fallen, would not the former glory be vastly outdone by the latter? And what is this but the gospel set in contrast with the law? The law glorifies God by its unlimited demands, its uncompromising threatenings, but it could gain no fulfilment of the one, and therefore must the world be left sunk beneath the weight of the other. Vain were all human endeavours to satisfy the law's requirements; therefore it remained that the vengeance should take effect, and God be glorified in terrible judgment, overwhelming the disobedient. But oh how different is the case with regard to the

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gospel! The gospel glorifies God, inasmuch as it is a scheme which shows with infinitely greater clearness than the law that God hates sin, for, 'sending His own Son in the Flesh, God condemned sin in the flesh,' and that God will punish sin, for He commanded His sword to awake against His fellow. And yet withal that God loves man, loves him with a love which throbs and yearns over its objects, for 'He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.' It were vain to look in the law for such manifestations of divine glory as this. The law could show God just, it could not show Him just and yet a justifier. It is, indeed, in the prophecies of Isaiah, that we read of this wondrous combination, 'just God and a Saviour;' but it is only in the gospel of Christ we ascertain how such a combination could ever be formed; and if it be a greater glory that justice should be so satisfied as to consent to the outgoings of mercy towards the lost than that mercy should for ever be pent up by the unanswered claims of justice; that in punishing sin God should save the sinner than that He should destroy the sinner to condemn the sin; that He should inscribe Himself 'Holy' on a renovated creation, sparkling with beauty and sunny with happiness, than that He should register the attribute on a devastated earth, torn and tossed by the whirlwind of His wrath; ah! then you may readily understand why, in the matter of glory, S. Paul gives the gospel such vast superiority over the law; for if it be a greater glory that whilst God is honoured in all His properties man should be delivered than that whilst honoured in some of His properties man should be destroyed, then, indeed, the conclusion comes out clear and irresistible, 'If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.'

H. MELVILL.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

Giving with Misgiving.

He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha. S. MARK vii. 34.

I.



T was an undoubted benefit which Christ was about to bestow. The sufferer before Him endured a double misery.

He was deaf; but his trouble did not end there. If pain and privation long to cry out and find relief in utterance, this boon, too, was denied him. The fire of yearning love glowing in a heart which longed for sympathy might kindle; but he could not speak with his tongue; the unruly member,

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which in most is only too swift to speak, refused to do his bidding; expression of thought and feeling, dear to us, and deemed so needful by most, was denied him. He was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech. These miseries Christ was about to relieve. He was going to unstop the silent ear, and the many voices of earth and the welcome voices of human love would be heard. He was going to release the captive tongue, and the man might say the things which his full heart longed to speak. The sufferer would no more be a maimed and incomplete human being, but restored to full and perfect physical manhood.

A blessing deep and great it would be to the sufferer, and yet Jesus Christ sighed. He knew well and sadly that every benefit is not a blessing, that in the sad story of life the blessing was sometimes turned into a curse. The shadow of the future stole in upon the present; for men are willing enough to be blessed, but often wilful in turning away their blessings, or in converting them to bitterness.

II. The special gift which our Saviour was about to bestow was one very likely to be turned into a curse. He was giving freedom to the tongue. No faculty which man possesses is so potent for evil or for good. It is the main medium of his influence over his fellow-man. More than in anything else the speech is the man, unless he be a hypocrite. The wise man knew its power, when he said that life and death were in the power of the tongue. Our Lord recognised how completely it represented the real man, when He gave the warning, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.' S. James perceived its terrific energy for evil, and the awful frequency of its abuse, when he denounced it as an untameable wild beast, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison!

And our own experience is only too fatally prolific of further proofs. How often has the unchecked tongue blasted the reputation and the hopes of men! How many a time the dreams and the rightful expectations of life in each other's love have been dashed away from young lovers' eyes by the mischievous and malicious whispers of irresponsible gossips! How many a man's prosperity and fortune have collapsed before a false report, or unwarrantably repeated truth! Love, life, truth, honour, all that give grace to being, have been scattered by the whispering tongue which poisons truth. No wonder, then, that, with all the devastation which the unlawful tongue had wrought in earth spread before His mind, Christ should be saddened as He loosened the fettered member, or sigh when He whispered, 'Ephphatha.'

III. Ephphatha, *i.e.* 'Be opened.' The Ephphatha of Christ was not spoken in Decapolis only. The rule of God's guidance in the

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rise and fall of nations, in the discovery of new laws, in the perfection of new arts, is the manifestation of the authority and kingship of Christ. The providence of God, it has been well said, is the mediatorial work of Christ. His voice is heard in the world, and His gifts are bestowed for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ. There is an Ephphatha heard in history. He sighed, Ephphatha! and the conflict of the Church was revealed to His evangelist. He sighed, Ephphatha! and the tongue of Galileo and Kepler told of the wondrous order of the heavens. He sighed, Ephphatha! and buried monuments gave up their records of the past, and threw side-lights on higher truths. He spake, Ephphatha! and Caxton gave new powers to the world. Knowledge stepped forth from her dust-covered shrine, and carried her rich bounties into every city and every house. History unlocked her long-hidden lore, and science painted in clearer colours the half-veiled face of nature. The tongue of Europe was loosed. But well might a sigh have been heaved as the Ephphatha was spoken. It is not truth alone, or holiness alone, which has been unlocked. It is not 'the well of English undefiled,' the pure song of Spenser, the heart-rousing vision of Dante, the chivalrous epic of Tasso, the stately and magnanimous verse of Milton alone, which have been given to the world. A fouler current mingles with the bright pure stream, and darkens the flood of knowledge—the unredeemed filth of Boccaccio, the unbridled licentiousness of Scarron, the stupid sensuality of Dancourt, the open indecency of Wycherly, the more fatal suggestiveness of Sterne. Like a deluge the wide-flowing flood of profane, immoral, and Christ-hating books pours forth upon the world. The press became indeed the voice of nations; but when it was loosed, a sigh drawn from the pure heart of Christ, wounded by the misuse of a glorious opportunity, might have been heard by the Church of God.

Vain, indeed, are our gifts of reason, fancy, imagination, observation, and patient attention to nature's laws, unless they are used to help forward ourselves and human kind on the road which leads to brighter, higher, and nobler life. Without that shaping, guiding voice to teach, and unless the ears are open to hear His words, we may speak greatly, sing sweetly, investigate freely, criticise keenly, but we shall not speak or sing or think holily or highly. We shall be as those who have every gift for which we have asked, save the one which would enable us to use them rightly. We shall be, like the fabled Tithonus, dowered with immortal age, but lacking the eternal youth to make our gifts of highest service. If we are wise and humble, therefore, we shall not merely covet earnestly the best gifts, but we shall also pray for grace to use them lawfully and lovingly.

BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER.

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The Deaf and Dumb Man Healed.

And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. S. MARK vii. 35.

LET us notice how the miracle was wrought. It was wrought—
I. In answer to a request. ‘They bring unto Him one that was deaf and that had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Jesus to put His hands upon him.’

They that brought this poor deaf and dumb man to Jesus had heard of the fame of Jesus, from the sayings of the demoniac whom He had healed; and they probably thought that He, who could cast out devils, could also impart hearing and speech. It may be, too, that they had read that the Messiah, when He came, according to the prophecy uttered concerning Him seven hundred years before, would work miracles of this nature. Isaiah had said that, when the Messiah should appear, ‘the ears of the deaf should be unstopped,’ and that ‘the tongue of the stammerers should be ready to speak plainly.’ Whether or not those who brought this deaf and dumb man were encouraged by these prophecies, and whether or not they thought Jesus to be the Messiah, they came to Him with the request that He would heal their afflicted friend. They knew by report of the power of Jesus, and therefore they came, with the prayer, like that of the leper, ‘Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst give hearing to the deaf and speech to the dumb.’

What an example for our imitation! The Apostle S. James says, ‘Ye have not, because ye ask not.’ If we will not come to Jesus for our spiritual necessities, we cannot expect to receive from Him the cures we require. Whereas if we came continually to Jesus in prayer, as did David, our hearts would be frequently uttering his song of praise and thanksgiving, ‘I love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my petition. Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.’

And how encouraging is this incident as respects intercessory prayer. These people of Decapolis came to Jesus with a request, not for themselves, but for a fellow-creature. And when we, like them, intercede with Jesus on behalf of other men, we may expect an answer of peace. We are told to ‘pray one for another.’ We are also told that ‘the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends.’

But when we have prayed, whether for ourselves or for our brethren, we must not dictate to God the mode in which our requests are to be granted. We must leave Christ to fulfil our petitions in His own way. This was the mistake made by the inhabitants of

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Decapolis. For observe, secondly, that this miracle was wrought, not only in answer to a request, but also—

II. In private. They that brought the deaf and dumb man to Jesus prescribed the mode of his recovery. They erred in the same way as did Naaman, the Syrian. Naaman, in his own mind, had pictured the method of his cure. He thought Elisha would come out and lay his hands upon the place, and so recover the leprosy. These suppliants committed a similar error. They beseech Jesus to 'put His hand upon him,' and heal him, as Jesus had done in other cases. But Jesus did otherwise. Instead of putting 'His hand upon him,' and healing him on the spot, He took Him aside. He took him apart from the crowd, and performed the cure in private. Why He took him aside we are not told. It might be intended to teach us humility. It might be intended to teach us not to court popularity or notoriety, not to let our voices be heard in the streets, not to let our left hand know what our right hand doeth; to do good privately, and to avoid ostentation.

But whatever object our Lord had in view in taking the man aside before he performed the miracle, one lesson we may learn, and that is, that if we would obtain spiritual cures, we must seek Him in private. The self-righteous Pharisee, when he performs his devotions, likes to be seen of men. He likes to be seen praying either in the chief seats of the synagogue, or at the corners of the street. But the broken-hearted publican shuts-to his door, and prays in secret. He enters into his closet, where no eye is upon him but the all-seeing eye of Jesus, and there he pours forth his earnest and contrite petition, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.' For the sake of privacy, Nathanael prayed under the fig-tree. For the sake of privacy, Jesus spent whole nights in prayer on the mountain-top. For the sake of privacy, Daniel knelt upon his knees in his chamber and prayed, and gave thanks there before his God. And if we spent more time in private with Jesus, we should come forth in public with our faces shining like the face of Moses, thus evincing that our spiritual disorders have been entirely cured. This explains why it is the Lord Jesus lays us upon sick-beds, and so takes us aside from the world. It is that He may hold secret converse with us, and do us good, apart from our fellow-men.

But however the cure is effected, the Lord Jesus generally works His cures in His own way. So it was in the case before us. This cure was wrought, not only in answer to a request, and in private, but also—

III. By the use of means. Jesus, if He pleased, could have laid His hands upon the deaf and dumb man, and so have healed him in a moment. But no; He used means. 'He put His fingers into his

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ears, and spat, and touched His tongue.' Now why Jesus employed these particular means, no one can say. Some have given reasons, but these reasons appear fanciful and not satisfactory. One thing is certain, these means did not work as a charm or spell, such as those impostors used, who had familiar spirits, who peeped and muttered. There was no near, if any, connection between the means used and the cure effected.

It may be that our Lord's great object was to point out that, although in themselves means are nothing without His blessing, yet those means which He has prescribed, however unsuitable they may appear to us, He will ever have used. We must use the means which God appoints, if we would expect the end to be attained. We are concerned with the means alone. The blessing rests entirely with the Lord.

Notice, now, therefore, the fourth particular in connection with the miracle. It was also wrought—

IV. With authority. Looking up to heaven, Jesus sighed, and then said to the man 'Ephphatha,' which is a Syriac word meaning, 'Be opened.'

Jesus 'looked up to heaven,' to signify to this poor man and the bystanders that the cure must come from God; that the hearing ear and the seeing eye the Lord has made, and that He can remake even both of them. He likewise wished to show that in all their miracles He wrought, 'He and the Father were one.'

He also sighed, to show how He sympathised in the sorrows and sicknesses and weaknesses which have been brought into this our fallen world through sin. He is therefore a merciful and compassionate high priest, able to weep with them that weep, to sorrow with them that sorrow; a sympathising and loving Saviour, touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

The authoritative utterance of that word, 'Ephphatha,' was the effectual remedy. He that once said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light—He that said, 'Lazarus, come forth,' and he that was bound with graveclothes did come forth—now said 'Ephphatha,' be opened, and 'straightway the deaf man's ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.'

Here, then, we see how we are to obtain the blessings we require. We must pray for ourselves, and others must also pray for us. We must seek Jesus in private. We must diligently and conscientiously use all the means which He has appointed. Yet after all, we must remember that it is the sovereign and authoritative word of Christ that must command the success we desire. Paul, of course, must plant. Apollos, of course, must not omit to water. But God alone can give the increase. A disconsolate preacher may, like the Apostles of old,

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be toiling all the night of a long ministry and take nothing. But it Jesus comes and gives the command where to cast the net, great shall be the number of souls that shall be taken. You remember how this was the case with S. Peter, that fisher of men, at the great day of Pentecost, when, by the Spirit's blessing, one sermon of S. Peter wrought marvellous results. No fewer than three thousand sinners were pricked to the heart, were converted and saved. In the work, therefore, of bringing souls to glory, we may with good reason say with the psalmist, 'The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we rejoice. Not unto us, not unto us, but to the Lord alone belongs the praise.' This must be our song on earth, as it soon will be, I trust, our song in heaven. 'Salvation—not through our own goodness, not through our own wisdom, not through our own power; but salvation to God and the Lamb. Salvation to God the Father, who gave His dear Son; salvation to Jesus Christ, that precious Lamb of God, whose Blood has washed us from our sins; salvation to God the Spirit, who quickened our dead souls; salvation to the Triune Jehovah, who has brought us off more than conquerors, and made us kings and priests; and we shall reign for ever and ever.'

C. CLAYTON.

The Sigh of Jesus.

And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. S. MARK vii. 34.

THERE is one trait, and only one, in which, though it may be our necessity, and perhaps our privilege, yet it can scarcely be called our duty, to be like our great Master. And yet that trait is almost the largest in our Saviour's character—sadness of spirit. And the reason why we are not to copy our Saviour's sadness is evident: it is twofold; one, because He Himself is happy now, and the duty of being like Him as He is, is greater than the duty of being like Him as He was; so that we are most copying Christ when we are exceedingly happy. And the other reason is, that those sorrows of Jesus were the very materials out of which He was making the Church's joy; therefore to imitate them would be as if a man should think to copy a rainbow by painting a shower. For when we are sad, we are so far frustrating the sadnesses of Jesus. Thus it was doubtless quite right that Jesus should sigh when He opened the ears of the deaf man; but that deaf man when he was cured, would he have been right to sigh? Jesus groaned as he raised Lazarus, but it would ill become the rising Lazarus to groan. And we are the healed; and we are the liberated; and we are the risen ones;

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therefore it is as incumbent upon us to rejoice, as it was on Him to sow those tears, from which all our harvest of rejoicing comes.

And yet, have not some of you a feeling, that because Jesus was a man of sorrows, therefore it is right for us to be sorrowful, so right, that to be very happy seems almost a wrong done to Him, and a sign of a want of real discipleship?

In all our Saviour's sorrows—I do not enter into the mysteries of Gethsemane and Calvary—but in all the sorrows of our Saviour's life among men, there are two features characteristic, beautiful, and instructive.

Our Saviour's recorded sadnesses were all for others. They were either, as at Bethany, sympathy with others' griefs; or as when He encountered the opposition of the Sadducees, for our sins; the selfish element was unknown.

Again, His sorrow was never an idle sentiment. There is a great deal of useless, impassioned feeling in the world. Thousands are pained by the wickedness and misery they see around; they descant upon it; they can even weep when they speak of it—but it leads to no action. There is no effort; there is no self-sacrifice. It is almost poetry. It is but little more than the luxury of a tragedy. How different His! We never read of a sigh or tear of Jesus, but it immediately clothes itself into a benevolent word, or a benevolent work. Jesus groaned in spirit, and said, 'Where have ye laid him?' Again He groaned in spirit, and said, 'Take ye away the stone.' When He beheld the city, He wept over it, and He said, 'If thou hadst known.' He sighed; but with the sigh, He said, 'Ephphatha.'

I question whether, if we were in a right state, there would ever be a sorrow which did not throw itself into an action.

Some receive affliction passively and meditatively. They go into seclusion. They live in the past. They dwell much in their own hearts. Their sorrows isolate them. I do not say they are wrong.

But others at once go forth the more. They see in their trial a call to energy. They make their sorrow the very element of some enterprise for usefulness. They throw themselves into work, even in their tears. We must hold that this is a higher course—because this is the most like Jesus.

The sigh of Jesus, as He healed the deaf and dumb man in Decapolis, has been made to speak many languages, according to the varied habits of mind of those who have interpreted it. I will arrange them under four heads, and we may call them: the Sigh of Earnestness: the Sigh of Beneficence: the Sigh of Brotherhood: and the Sigh of Holiness. Let us note each: lest, by omitting one, we should miss our lesson.

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I. Because it says that 'looking up to heaven, He sighed,' some connect the two words, and account that the sigh is a part of the prayer, an expression of the intensity of the workings of our Lord's heart when He was supplicating to the Father. Like as even now, when the Holy Ghost, who is none other than the Spirit of Christ, prays in a man, He does it 'with groanings which cannot be uttered.' And we know well that vehemence, whether it be feeling or action, according to our present frame, doth vent itself in a sigh or groan; for the original word will equally bear to be translated sigh or groan.

And, if the Son of God sighed when He prayed, surely they have most of the spirit of adoption, not who offer up an apathetic form, but they who have such a sense of what communion with God is, and such an apprehension of the extent of their own necessity and misery, when they are on their knees, and of the vastness of the boon they are asking, that they bring their whole power to the great work, and cannot repress and hinder the strong emotion; and, in their very eagerness, exhaust themselves; till every tone and gesture speak of the struggle and ardour they feel within.

II. But it has been said again, that He who never gave us anything but what was bought by His own sufferings, so that every pleasure is a spoil purchased by His Blood, did now, by the sigh, and under the feeling that He sighed, indicate that He purchased the privilege to restore to that poor man the senses he had lost. And so it is true, as it is touching, that for every joy of ours there has gone up a woe of Christ's. Every moment's breath, I conceive (did we see it rightly), every better thought that ever goes through the mind, the sunbeam of real affection, every natural blessing we possess, we owe it to the sigh of Jesus. Had He not died, nothing would have been saved out of the utter ruin. Would we could never forget it, but the instant a joy falls, we trace it up to its true fount! What dignity would it give to all we have, what sacred sweetness, if we regarded the labouring bosom of Christ as the birthplace of every pleasure; and remembered that before that avenue of blessing was opened to us, there had been His sigh!

III. But furthermore, as I conceive of this, that sigh was the sigh of fellowship, the sigh of brotherhood. The scene before Him would be to His mind but a representative of thousands of thousands. His comprehensive thought, starting from that point, would travel on, till it embraced, in one dark union, all the miseries with which this earth is filled. And what, if one poor stricken one was healed, what was one drop taken out of that ocean? There that ocean lay in its blackness, its own incalculable depth, unsounded, unfathomable.

And yet the thought that what He could do was as nothing, did

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not stay His hand. He did not do (as we too often act) He did not do nothing, because He could not do all. He sighed, and He saved one! And that is true brotherhood. We live in a world where perfect happiness is impossible. For if we do not grieve, if our lot is as bright as God can make it, still every breath of air is tainted with anguish; the narrowest prospect has within it scenes of wretchedness; and the very foot cannot fall but it treads on sorrow. And when we think that what we see and feel is but a slight fraction of what is still unseen and unknown in this life, what shall we do? Take the humiliation, and shrink not from our duty. Feel with all, and do good to whom we may. Sigh, but work.

IV. But fourthly. All this still lay on the surface. Do you suppose that our Saviour's mind could think of all the physical evil, and not go on to the deeper moral causes from which it sprang? Doubtless in those closed ears and that chained tongue, He read, too plainly written, the fall, the distance, the degradation, the corruption, the universal defilement of our world. And where was the remedy to meet this disease — so wide and deadly? How long before that day when He should unclothe the gates of that great prison-house, and re-admit the exiled race back to their lost home. And till that day, what vast evil would Satan's empire have accomplished! What floods of iniquity would have rolled over the world, from generation to generation! How would the slime of the wicked one increase! What dark clouds of thick transgression would be going up every moment to grieve the Father's eye! And so, He sighed.

But, after all, what is worth sighing for, but sin? And observe, He only sighed. He was not angry. He sighed. That is the way in which perfect holiness looked on the sins of the universe. So, in the view of every fellow-creature's sin, don't you be angry, but be sorry for it. And, if your little child sin, let him see, not that you are angry, but sorry. If a man sin against you, let him see nothing but that he has made you very sorry. It will prevail where punishment will do nothing; where rebuke will do nothing. It is better than many words, for it is nearest to the mind of Jesus.

JAMES VAUGHAN.

The Loss of Christian Fellowship.

And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech.
S. MARK vii. 32.

CHRISTIAN Fellowship! The joy of life on earth, the foretaste of the life of heaven! And this miracle shows us how it may be lost, and the means by which it may be regained.

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I. The miracle is in several respects unique :

1. It is peculiar to S. Mark. This it shares with the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida, and the parable of the seed growing secretly.

2. There is a peculiar fulness of detail as to the treatment and apparent difficulty in the healing : we notice five distinct steps in it ; in this again it is similar to the healing of the blind man.

3. It seems to cause our Lord especial suffering : for we are told that 'He sighed,' or rather groaned.

II. The spiritual disease typified by the man's infirmity, the loss of fellowship with God and heaven :

1. The disease, deafness with its accompanying, and perhaps resulting, imperfection in speech, is a great hindrance to fellowship with man ; it is not so to the same extent with the blind ; they can talk and listen, and, indeed, their other senses only become more acute ; but the deaf are cut off from conversation with their fellow-men.

2. Our Lord groans at the man's condition, at the thought of what he is losing ; and the spiritually deaf and stammering, those who have lost the faculty of hearing God's voice, losing the power of communion with Him and with heaven, how sad is their state ! The world beyond is cut off from them ; they cannot realise S. Paul's words, 'Our conversation is in heaven' (Phil. iii. 20).

3. What this fellowship is :

a. Its beauty ; the harmony of the world as God meant it to be, beyond the discords of earth, to enter into the joyous life of heaven.

b. Its power ; union not only with one another, but with the whole body of Christ, the power of the Holy Ghost, the life-blood of the Church, circulating throughout the whole body.

c. Its helpfulness ; the sympathy which enables Christians to bear one another's burdens (Gal. vi. 2) to fight one another's battles, the help of sympathy, example, and united service of God.

III. The means by which the disease may be cured, and the lost fellowship be regained :

I. 'He took him aside from the multitude' (ver. 33), solitude with Jesus, going aside from the multitude, that in meditation we may hear His voice.

2. 'He . . . put his fingers into his ears . . . and touched his tongue' (ver. 35). Sacramental touch, not only hearing the voice of Jesus, but feeding on Him, fellowship in His life (1 S. John i. 3).

3. 'He charged them that they should tell no man' (ver. 36). Spiritual reserve as to what passes between Christ and our soul, we do not listen to the voice of Jesus that we may tell others, but that we may ponder the words in our hearts, and live by them.

REV. ALFRED G. MORTIMER, D.D.

OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

Missionary Timidity.

2 KINGS ii. 12-15.



WE are apt perhaps to fancy that, to God's servants of old, to the Apostles and others who saw the miracles of Jesus and did the like themselves, or even to the prophets before His coming, who also did miracles and saw them done, faith must have been a far easier thing than it is to ourselves. And of course it would be wrong to deny that the sight of signs and wonders was to them an aid to faith, perhaps a necessary aid, a thing without which they could not have believed. But it does not follow that it put such an absolute constraint upon the mind as we often think it would, if we were to see such a miracle ourselves, nor that they could not help believing in God's truth when they saw God's works. If faith had been made so easy and natural to them it would scarcely have been faith; and it was by faith that they all were saved, both the patriarchs and prophets of the old covenant, and the Apostles and other early recipients of the gospel. We are blessed above the prophets and kings of old, our Lord Himself teaches us, for they desired to see the things which we see, and saw them not; and if we are less blessed than the Apostles, that is not because we see less than they did, but because we believe less—else if we had faith like theirs, we should possess the special blessing of those who have not seen but yet have believed.

I say this, that we may better understand the position of Elisha as described in the text, and the temptations he suffered under; the likeness of his state of mind and his temptations to what our own may very likely be. He had seen Elijah's miracles, and that sight was, as it proved, enough to sustain his faith under its trials; but very likely it made faith no easier to him than it is made to us by any of God's mercies that our own faith rest on—such as the stories of God's past miracles in Scripture, or the goodness of His common providence, or the continuing life of the Christian Church, and the gradual fulfilment of prophecy in its history and in that of the kingdoms of the world. We find it hard to believe that God is a living God, a God nigh at hand, not far from every one of us; and we, if we were asked why it is we find it so hard to believe, should

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very likely say that it is because we have never seen a miracle; because the living God, whom in spite of all we do believe in, has never vouchsafed to show us a visible sign of His life. But with Elisha also, as with us, it was a matter of faith and not of nature to know God as a living God, and a God with him; Elisha had seen many miracles, while none of us, I suppose, have seen one, but that did not alter the case.

For it is easy enough to believe that God may work in another man with another man, as He worked with His Prophets and Apostles—that He may have done such deeds by them as Elisha had seen and we had read of. What we find it so hard to believe is, that He should do such works in us, with us, or by us; and this point of faith was probably as hard to Elisha as to us. For one man's soul is quite out of the reach of another man's, even though they live together,—even though they know and love each other as well as these two great prophets did. Elijah was a prophet indeed: by what he did on Carmel, and what he spoke in Naboth's vineyard, and what he suffered by the brook Cherith and in the wilderness of Horeb, he had reconquered Israel for the Lord. Small wonder was it that such a man had such faith and grace that when he smote the waters they divided hither and thither to let him go over, as of old when smitten by Moses's rod. But what was Elisha? What guide had he to look to now that the Lord had taken away his master from his head? What strength to trust in, now that the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof was gone away, and he saw him no more? 'Where was the Lord God of Elijah?' The Lord God had been Elijah's God, but would He be his God too?

Some such doubts and fears as these found, we may believe, their utterance in the prophet's words in the text. But, if his words are the words of faith sorely tried, his acts are the acts of faith victorious: 'When he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.' Here was the Lord God of Elijah; He was with him after all,—able to part the waters before him as He had before Elijah himself. Faith had triumphed over its difficulties, and was the more glorious in proportion as these had been sorer. The hard thing he had asked for was done: the spirit of Elijah rested upon him in double measure, and in that spirit he went on to do the Lord's work, as Elijah had done before him.

I. So faith had its victory: so, if we are faithful, it will have still. We are tempted, sometimes, to think that God, who was of old time a very present help in trouble, is now a God far off, not one nigh at hand. We remember the works of the Lord, and call to mind His wonders of old time; but we do not go on, as the Psalmist did, to meditate upon all His works, and say, 'Who is so

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great a God as our God?' so great as our God is still? Practically, we think of God as if He were a man, and a dead man instead of the living God He is—as if He were a man who lived once, but is dead now, and gone to heaven. We do not doubt that He lives there, but we do not expect Him to rise again, to show any signs of life on earth. It is not only the dulness of our hearts that makes us take this view—the facts of the world's history seem to bear it out. 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' Must not the arm of the Lord be sleeping, that we never see it put on strength as in the days of old, as in the former years? Is it not true that God has gone to heaven, gone hence and is no more seen? Jesus has been gone from us a long time since first He came. He promised to come quickly, but He has not come yet. Is it strange if men have begun to ask, not only as Elisha did, 'Where is He?' but as S. Peter foretold that the scoffers of the last time would, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' Is it strange? or indeed we may say, is it unreasonable?

II. Look at the facts; they bear out those who ask the question—they encourage the doubters in their doubt. Of course we know that it is wrong to doubt, that such unbelief is only a temptation of the devil, but though it is wrong, can we say it is unreasonable? If we reason with the devil he has the best of the argument; if we want to overcome him, we must meet him, not by words, but by deeds. If we ask, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' and stand still, gazing up into heaven till we see a sign of Him, then verily, as He said Himself, 'there shall no sign be given unto this generation.' But if we wax bold in faith,—if we use the memory of the past, not as a mere memory but as a living reality, gathering up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and then going with it to do as Elisha did—then we shall find that the Lord God of Elijah is our God too; then the spirit of Elijah shall rest upon us—yea, the Spirit of glory and of God.

And as it is with Christian faith in general, so with the particular branch of Christian duty of which we now purpose to speak. No Christian who is in any way worthy of the name can doubt that the propagation of the gospel is a duty of the Church in every age; none of us, I hope, would venture in set terms to deny it. But it is possible that some of us may have felt the temptation which we see so often prevailing in our days, to think that no good can come of the efforts actually made to propagate it—to despair of the cause of God's Kingdom. We contrast what we see done by our missionaries with what was done by the Apostles; we contrast, perhaps, the men themselves with the Apostles themselves. We look for them to show an Apostle's spirit, to display, if not the same miraculous powers, at any rate the same inward graces, and the same gifts of wisdom and judgment. And if we see, or think we see, any shortcoming in these

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respects—if it is too plain that the average English missionary is a man not much better, nor any wiser, than ourselves, but rather the reverse—then we say, Where is the Lord God of Peter and Paul? How can we expect these commonplace men to do any good by their preaching? If we had Apostles to send to the heathen, we would be glad to send them; but these men are not Apostles, and why should we trouble ourselves to support them and the like of them?

So long as we ask such questions, we may go on asking them, and wait in vain for an answer. But if, instead of talking and wondering how any good thing can come out of us and our own country, we arise and do our duty in faith and zeal, then we shall find among ourselves the stuff that Apostles are made of; then we shall ask, and the Lord will shed upon us the Spirit that makes Apostles. As it is with us, so it doubtless was with them of old time in their own days, who are the admiration and the despair of ours. The devil was always ready to taunt those holy men with their inferiority to the Saints who had gone before them; but they did not pay heed to the devil, but to Him who had promised, ‘Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’

W. H. SIMCOX.

At the Spring of the Waters.

He went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there.

2 KINGS ii. 21.

I. ‘THE spirit of Elijah,’ they said, ‘doth rest on Elisha.’ It was true. Yet who is not struck with the difference, with the contrariety, between them? And who does not trace in this contrast the manifoldness, the flexibility, the appropriateness too, of God’s working, as the Book of God has delineated, as the Church of God has exemplified it?

At first sight the succession is a deterioration. The glow, the rush, the genius, the inspiration, the awe, the prowess, seems to have died with the master. The inhabitant of the desert, the man of mystery and apparition, the ‘enemy’ of kings, the slayer of prophets, the reformer and iconoclast, is gone—the departure of one piece with the life—wind and fire ministering still—bearing away from earth, in confessed yet glorious failure, the man of whom earth had shown itself unworthy. There remains a *man*—a dweller in cities and houses—living the common life, ‘eating and drinking’ with princes and neighbours, presiding over educational homes, the counsellor of his countrymen in peril, their comforter in trouble, their referee in controversy, their powerful mediator, their self-forgetting friend. Viewed in one aspect, no position was ever more level, no work more human,

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no office less heroic. Yet it is upon this life that 'a double portion' of Elijah's spirit rested. The disciple's life, not the master's, is the 'shadow cast before' of a life above man's. If the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elias, it was 'Eliseus the prophet' who dimly prefigured Christ.

The very record of Elijah's history should have prepared us for this juster estimate. In the great vision at Horeb—the second proclamation on that spot, of the glory which is the name of the Lord—it was not in the wind, it was not in the fire, it was not in the earthquake, it was in 'the still small voice,' that the real Presence, the very Deity, was manifested to the longing and fainting spirit. It is so everywhere, and in all things. Influence ranks essentially above power, and tranquillity is evermore a condition of grace. It is one of the high objects of Scripture to correct man's judgments upon insignificance and greatness. When Elisha follows Elijah, the passing generation counts it a descent and a decline, looks back with regret to the stormier scenes amidst which, and the grander agencies in which, the prophet of the past exercised his ministry, and returns with dissatisfaction, almost with complaining, to the human, the common, the neighbourly life, which is all that remains to it of a predecessor's magnificence. And yet, all the time, just because that second life is human, touches our own at all points, and is exercised not in 'great matters' which are 'too high for it,' but in a contact and a converse which 'refrains and keeps it low,' it is the truer and the more Christ-like and the more God-like of the two. And it is in the discernment of a divine hand, in whose transitions from a past to which distance lends enchantment, to a present in which there is neither illusion nor explanation, that a large part of earth's trial, probation, and discipline lies, for some of the Church's noblest spirits, to whom the old is consecrated by pious association, and the new comes harsh and bleak and unlovely for the lack of it. Yet Christ is in each as each is; and the dweller in the age that is not must miss Him.

There is one point peculiar to this parable, and that is, the stress laid upon 'the spring of the waters.' 'The water is naught, and the ground barren.' Man, then, might have been satisfied to deal with the symptoms, with the stream, and with the ground. But God's prophet goes to the spring of the waters, and casts the healing salt in there. There must be 'a new cruse,' something with which man has not intermeddled; that is one necessity; and then, the casting in must be at the spring, at the source, if God is to say, as the prophet here reports Him, 'I have healed these waters.'

When the miracle is thus interpreted into parable, we see how infinite may be its applications. It is the parable of thoroughness.

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It bids us go to the spring of our disease, and never rest till the antidote is at work there. It would have us look, in all our life—the national, the ecclesiastical, the educational, as well as the personal—first for the salt and then for the spring; so that, the waters being healed at the source, the issue may be no longer ‘death or barrenness.’

II. There are two aspects of our earthly being, each impressive, each admonitory. The one is that which represents it as a multitude, the other is that which represents it as a unit. The one bids us to number our days, to make each a little life, to feel how many they are, and how God has made each one both complete and capacious and responsible. This is that Scripture figure of the walk for which the inmate of the home starts each morning, and from which he returns at evening to his rest and to his dwelling. ‘This is that view of life which is good for the Christian man; walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost; fearing no evil, because ‘his time is in God’s hands,’ and he is dwelling, every moment of it, in the sweet sunshine of His countenance. To walk before God in holiness and righteousness all the days till his change come; this is the heritage of God’s servants, and it is their sufficient admonition to possess it.

But the Word which speaks not in vain, and multiplies not figures in superfluity, has another metaphor for life, which calls it not a walk but a journey. From the birth to the death there is movement, there is progression, somewhence and somewhither. There is no returning at nightfall to the quarters left at the sunrising. The life is making for a terminus and a destination. It has a plan, conscious or unconscious. It has a scheme and a system, known to itself or unknown. It is not a multitude of lives, it is one life. God sees it as a whole. God can write its epitaph—‘He did good,’ or, ‘He did evil,’ not both, and it needs but to inscribe the name, and the mother’s name, and the length of the course, and the place of the burial.

The life is a unit life, and this is what gives significance, gives solemnity, to its starting. We are here at the spring of the waters; and here, therefore, must a more than prophet’s hand cast in the salt.

There is a continuity, there is a unity, in each life, but it may be, once at least, it is enough here to say, once sharply, decisively, splendidly broken. We enter into no mysticism, we trench upon no disputed ground between school and school, between party and party, between church and church, when we recognise as a fact and as a phenomenon the possibility, proved in thousands of instances, of a new life in the soul. Call it by what name you will, provided that

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you mean by it this, a change—heart-deep and therefore life-wide—such as brings God into everything, as a Father, a Saviour, and a Sanctifier.

This change may be swift, or it may be gradual. It may be due to one influence, or to many influences; some of them far in the past, some of them undefined and even unconscious. It has as many varieties as exist in the resources of a God whose way is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not seen. But experience has shown that youth is the point most favourable, most helpful, in regard to the experience on which we dwell. The piety of childhood is beautiful, but proverbially evanescent. There must be, if the word must have place in things divine, some knowledge of good and evil, some acquaintance with sorrow and sin, some practical proof of the weakness of resolution, some protracted search of the soul after a still unrealised strength, before the helm of the being is finally set heavenward, before a man can echo the Samaritan testimony, ‘Now I believe, not because of thy saying, for I have heard for myself, and know.’

DEAN VAUGHAN.

Elijah's Farewell to Elisha.

And Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee. 2 KINGS ii. 9.

THE assumption of Elijah the prophet into heaven is one of those incidents in the Bible history which takes possession of the imagination in the earliest years of childhood, while it also suggests problems of the highest interest as long as we can read our Bibles or think at all. And in contemplating the narrative the eye at once rests upon the figure of Elisha. Ever since his call at Abel-meholah, Elisha had been generally in attendance on the great prophet, and thus the courtiers of Jehoshaphat describe him as ‘Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah.’ Elisha seems to have lived at Gilgal, not the familiar spot to us, down in the Jordan valley where Joshua, in an earlier age, had set up the twelve stones, but another Gilgal on the watershed in Ephraim, from which the two prophets went down by a gentle slope towards Bethel. Elijah hinted, it seems, by some special intimation, what was going to happen; and, whether from personal humility, or out of consideration for his attached follower, he desired Elisha to remain at Gilgal while he himself went on alone to Bethel. Elisha refused to leave him, using an adjuration of peculiar solemnity to describe his attachment. The two went on to Bethel. Bethel was one of those Jewish

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towns at which there was a college, or society of young men training by prayer and study for the prophetic ministry, and known generally as 'the sons of the prophets'; and Elijah probably desisted, by his words, or by his presence, to console and to encourage these candidates for his own sacred office, before leaving them for ever. They, too, had been informed of the expected event; they asked Elisha abruptly if he was prepared for it. Elisha could not bear the question. He knew what was coming only too well. The matter was too grave, too sacred, for words. Again Elijah bade Elisha remain. He himself was inspired to go on to Jericho. Again Elisha refused, in the words and with the vehemence of his former refusal, and accordingly they walked on together some twelve or thirteen miles down the valley to Jericho. At Jericho there is another prophetic training college, and the report of Elijah's approaching departure had spread here also, and Elisha, as the person chiefly affected, was cross-questioned by the students as he had been cross-questioned before, and, as before, he answered that he knew what was before him, but could not speak of it. Would not Elisha, Elijah asked for the last time, would he not remain at Jericho? The request was met with the same peremptory refusal, and the two walked on to the Jordan, while fifty young men from the prophetic school in Jericho ascended the heights behind the town which commanded the lower part of the Jordan valley, to see what would happen. And then the two travellers walked on together across the sandy plain. They paused for a moment on the river-bank. Elijah must cross to the side of his native Gilead. He smites the waters; they divide hither and thither; the two pass on dry ground. And then, as both stand together on the eastern bank, they feel that the end has come. Only a few words passed, as when men know that the time may be counted by minutes, when they know that they have to compress into a sentence or two the meaning of a life. 'Ask,' said the departing prophet to his disciple, 'ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee.' Elijah speaks as a man who has power with God, and Elisha answers accordingly. 'I pray thee that a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.' Elisha asks not that his spiritual endowments as a prophet might be twice as great as those of his master, but that he might receive twice as large a portion of Elijah's spirit as any other of the sons of the prophets. He asked it, we may be sure, not with any such poor object as the enhancement of his personal power, but that he may better do his appointed work; and, although he is told that he has asked a hard thing, he is told also that it will be granted if he actually sees his master in the act of departure. 'If thou seest me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but, if not, it shall not be so.' Then, and, as it

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appears, quite suddenly, the end came. It came to pass, that, as they still went on and talked, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder. And Elijah went up by a storm into heaven; and Elisha saw it, and cried, 'My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more.'

Now, those who try to govern their thoughts by God's revelation, instead of trying to mould revelation so as to suit their changing thoughts, will take this narrative as it stands. The three days' search for the body of Elijah, which by Elisha's permission was made by the fifty young students from Jericho, was not more successful than some of the literary excursions of modern writers, in quest of a natural explanation of what Scripture treats, beyond all doubt, as a preternatural occurrence akin to the translation of Enoch in the early patriarchal age. Such an occurrence is, at least, in keeping with the life which it closes, and those who believe that this is the primary question which underlies all others, those who believe that the physical order of this universe may be, and occasionally is, subordinated to the interests of its moral order, will not be startled even at this distinguished honour put upon one of the greatest of the servants of God in an age of widespread apostasy from truth and duty.

But, not to dwell too much at length on the supernatural side of the matter, let us observe that this event brings before us, although surrounded with unusual circumstances, the departure of a great servant of God from the world of sense; and whenever or wherever such an event as that happens, it is one of solemn import. Each such emigrant seems to echo Elijah's injunction, 'Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.' And a great deal may depend on our witnessing such an event. Christ is nowhere preached so powerfully, it has been truly said, as He is preached from a Christian death-bed. Let us try, at any rate, to understand the solemnity which is inseparable from any event of the kind.

I. We see here, first of all, that which is involved more or less in every such occasion, the parting of friends. It was no new tie which bound Elijah to Elisha. Elisha owed everything that a good man holds dear to the prophet of Gilead; and hence it was that when Elijah felt his end to be near, and wished to be alone, the strong passionate love of Elisha persistently follows him from one stage to another of the weary journey which ends beyond the Jordan, just as friends will watch by a bedside unwearyingly, from one stage to another, through weeks, through months, through years of a last illness, and the last command of the prophet addressed to his follower was the language of tender and devoted friendship. 'Ask

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what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.' To Elijah that solemn moment was, we may be sure, a great deal else, but he speaks of it as removal from the companionship of Elisha.

Friendship is one of the most beautiful products of the natural life of man. It is the tie of moral or of mental kinship as distinct from the tie of blood, and of the two it is sometimes the strongest. 'There is a friend,' said Solomon, 'that sticketh closer than a brother.' Solomon, no doubt, remembered the mutual love of his own father and Jonathan, an attachment which no family rivalry, no dark anticipations about the future, could imperil. The highest effort of friendship is referred to by our Lord when He is anticipating, no doubt, His own awful and voluntary sacrifice. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' But this was understood after their measure among the best and noblest of the heathen, and pagan history has its splendid narratives of self-sacrifice inspired by friendship, and friendship was a subject for discussion and study, and filled a much more considerable place in the writings and conversation of the better sort of heathens than it does among ourselves. Treatises on friendship, on its nature, on its obligations, on its spirit, on its advantages, were not at all uncommon among literary people in Greece and Rome. The subject seemed somehow to yield a special sort of satisfaction to their moral natures. And Christianity has been reproached, more than once, with having somewhat thrown into the shade so attractive and so fruitful an element in the moral and social life of man. The truth is that, in presence of a law of universal charity which, however little it may be obeyed, is present to, and weighs upon, the Christian conscience, it seems a poor and an inadequate thing to offer a whole heart to any one human being; and, moreover, in doing so, there is, no doubt, as ordinary friendship goes, a real risk of selfishness, the selfishness which jealously exacts an equivalent for all that it offers, and is ready to be disappointed, or wounded, on the least signs of a want of reciprocity. And friendship of this kind, need I say it, is not a fruit of the law of love. It springs from an opposite principle of self-gratification, and therefore, with the advance of Christianity, the cultivation of a friendship on precisely the principle which governs the cultivation of a garden, namely, with a view to some return, has been naturally discredited.

But there have been Christian friendships, like that of Basil of Cæsarea and Gregory Nazianzen during their student days at Athens, in which all that was best in the old classical model is preserved, and is transfigured by the new law and life of Christ in which love is strong without being jealously restricted to a single object, without losing aught of its purity, or of its disinterestedness. Such walking

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in the house of God as friends, such friendship as this, contracted beneath the eye, and sanctified by the presence, of the All Holy, is a spiritual agency of the greatest power. The act by which two souls make, as it were, their stock of thought and feeling common property, so that each draws upon the resources of the other until the mutual influence is, at times, so powerful that soul seems to blend almost indistinguishably with soul, this, it is obvious, cannot but exert a decisive influence upon a man's whole destiny; and therefore few acts in a young man's life are more important in their consequences than the choice of his friends. '*Noscitur a sociis*' ('a man is known by his companions') is only true with limitations. We may associate with those whom we do not quite like, but whom we hope to benefit. But '*Noscitur ab amicis*' ('A man is known by his friends'), if the proverb exists, would be much nearer the mark, since the character of a man's friends is an index, if not of what he himself is, at least of his governing tastes and dispositions. And the parting of real friends is consequently one of those tragical experiences of the human soul which cause far more suffering than any pain of the body, which leave wounds, not unfrequently, that bleed till death. It is especially the case when the friendship is dissolved by the misconduct of one of the friends. It is also the case, although in quite another sense, when a friendship becomes no longer possible, owing to some serious divergence of conviction on what are felt to be points of the first importance. Nothing in his whole life caused greater pain to the late Mr. Keble than his renunciation of the friendship which from early years had bound him to Arnold; but the time came when he felt that he had to choose between the friend of his boyhood whom he dearly loved, but whose principles as it appeared to him were becoming less and less reconcilable with truths of the highest moment and the eternal Friend above. Far less painful is a parting brought about, not by any human will, but by the course of God's providence, as when a man stands by his friend's death-bed, and knows that in a few hours the two will be in two different spheres of being; and yet how solemn a moment is that, how full it is of inevitable pain, of inevitable awe! Granting that that scene is irradiated by the highest Christian hopes, that, almost visibly to faith, the Lord comforts the sufferer lying sick upon his bed, and makes all his bed in his sickness; granting that there is all that the dying need, prayers, repentance, sacraments, the felt presence and pardon of the divine Redeemer; granting that the last moments are a spiritual triumph, and that Elijah is taken up in a chariot and horses of fire into heaven—the fire of a consuming charity for God and man—yet to reflect that that long companionship, that all those years of mutual influence, of common opportunities, of common dangers, of common struggles,

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failures, victories, are over, to recall not merely the joys of friendship, but its inevitable sorrows, the hasty expression of opinion, the easy acquiescence in mistakes, the cowardice of affection as well as its passion, and to know that all that chapter of life is for ever closed, this is one of the most solemn experiences of the human soul on earth; and if, before he is taken from us, a dying friend can teach us the responsibilities as well as the privileges of friendship he will have done us a service of the very highest and most sacred kind.

II. For we see here, too, the last act of a great life. It is not perhaps what we should have expected from a man like Elijah the Tishbite. A last solemn denunciation of the house of Ahab, a last punishment threatened or executed upon the Baal-worshippers, a word of warning which might rouse Israel, before it was too late, from the dead—this, we think, would have been more in character. But, in truth, the greatest and the strongest men are not unfrequently the simplest and the tenderest; and Elijah, whose life had been passed in vehement speech and in heroic action—Elijah is thinking, just like any humble peasant, of what he can best do for his, as yet, undistinguished follower. ‘Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken away from thee.’

And—mark it well—all that had preceded in Elijah’s career led up to that incident as to the very crown and flower of his life. His bold denunciation of Ahab’s apostasy, his fearless appeals to Obadiah and then to Ahab during the famine, his encounter with the prophets of Ashtaroth and Baal on Mount Carmel, his retirement in despondency to Horeb, his meeting with Ahab in judgment for the murder of Naboth, his prediction of their master’s death to the messengers of Ahaziah, his defiance of the soldiers who were sent to take him—these are the more prominent acts of a life which exhibits fiery zeal, indomitable courage, which triumphs over the greatest difficulties, which is rendered pathetic by the deepest sorrows.

And now he knew, and others knew, that the end had come, and the last act for which all others had prepared remained. It was an act of pure unselfishness, of simple thought for the needs of another. A death-bed does two things. It puts the finishing stroke on life, and it yields a revelation of character. When there is nothing more to be looked for here, men are real and simple, if simplicity and reality are ever possible for them at all. There have been, it is said, actors upon the scaffold, but, for the credit of our common humanity, I believe that they are few and far between. As a rule, dying men act and speak in accordance with the strongest and deepest motives that have governed them through life, or that govern them at the moment. To note the last act, to hear the last words, of a good

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man is, therefore, a solemn privilege which ought to redouble our zeal for all that has made him what he is.

III. But, lastly, and chiefly, the solemnity of the scene consists in this, that Elijah is visibly about to take his departure for another world. 'Before I be taken away from thee.' Elijah was, indeed, taken in body as well as in spirit. His translation reminds us that death is not only the conclusion of one stage of being: it is the door through which we enter upon another, and the light which already streams through the openings illumines the present scene with a strange interest and awe; for it has been observed, sometimes reproachfully, sometimes in the way of praise, that, as a matter of fact, Christianity has immensely enhanced in men's minds the significance of death,—that, whereas great heathen writers and teachers have endeavoured to persuade men to pass through life with careless light-heartedness, making the best of the enjoyments of the hour, and leaving the stern possibilities of the future out of sight till they really are upon us, Christianity has succeeded to the duty of that Macedonian slave who had to remind his royal master, morning after morning, 'Philip, remember that thou art human!' And this witness is true. Christianity has made us men think with more awe of each single death, by pointing out to us unflinchingly what death really means,—that it is not merely, or chiefly, the dissolution of an animal organisation, but that it is the departure of a living spirit, whose probation is at length over, into the eternal world. It is the survival, the certain, the necessary survival, of the soul of man, which, in Christian eyes, gives to death its tremendous meaning. If death were, in reality, only the first step towards resolving a human body into its chemical elements,—if, while the force which had invigorated, and the atoms of matter which had composed, that body were preserved under other forms, all else had, like streams of morning cloud, melted into the infinite azure of the past, then, no doubt, we might rightly look upon a dying man with easy composure—with the composure with which we should regard the fall of a ripe apple from its parent tree. But everything—let me insist on it—everything depends upon the question whether, in death, man dies as a whole, or whether there is a real, important, or, rather, the most important, part of his body which necessarily survives him.

Few things are stranger in the history of human thought than the vehemence with which materialism from time to time re-asserts itself, as though men were afraid of the true dignity of their nature, and sought to bury deep in the folds of matter that higher element of life which makes them what they are. They are by no means the highest minds in the ancient world who tried to assist men to think that they were nothing but aggregations of

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atoms, after all. The better heathen, like Plato, knew that such a doctrine was, in itself, false, and that it was, in its effects upon our common human nature, degrading. The life of the soul after death was no simple discovery of Christianity. It was a truth of natural religion which men perceived as soon as they thought steadily about what went on within themselves. And Christianity only taught men more clearly, and with new evidence of its truth, what was already a familiar belief among the best and highest minds.

The doctrine which denies that there is any spiritual element in man, which survives death, ordinarily rests itself upon two propositions, each of which may be shown to be inaccurate.

There is, first of all, the assumption that all a man's knowledge comes to him through the activity of his senses. Now, in point of fact, just as many perceptions of our senses elicit no thought at all, so many thoughts present themselves every day, every hour of our lives, which cannot by any means whatever be traced to the mechanical action of sense. Thought of a certain kind is extraordinarily active during dreams,—that is to say, when the functions of the senses are altogether in suspense. And, again, memory—that is, thought acting upon the past—is independent, from the nature of any present activity of sense. The substance of the brain is said to be renewed in twelve years at the most; but we remember—and often the more vividly as we get older—scenes, personages, events, of forty or fifty years ago; and here, therefore, there is a capacity independent of and beyond the immediate action of the senses. And observe that the existence of this capacity is just as much a matter of experience as anything we see, or hear of, or touch. This, I say, is a matter which every man may test for himself.

And he can test the second of the two propositions or assumptions to which I have referred with equal facility, namely, that all mind is merely an effect of matter, so that, if the brain be irritated in a certain way, thought must necessarily follow. Why if this were true, the orang-outangs ought to be great thinkers. Their brains, as we are constantly reminded, differ from those of men only in a lesser degree of intricacy, and in a certain peculiarity of form. The weight and size of their brain is substantially the same. Why then, I ask, do not the anthropoid apes produce the same ideas as man? Why have they never constructed a language? Why do not they even sing? The more you insist upon the similarity of their brain-substance to ours, the more obvious it becomes that man can only compass results so astonishingly beyond them in virtue of a higher something that acts upon, but is independent of, his brain—a something that is himself; the more it becomes obvious that he speaks and thinks because speech and thought are not the product

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of any structural peculiarity of his organs, but of the self-conscious principle within him which controls them. If an orang-outang could distinguish between itself and its sensations; if it could, for one moment, project its thought from itself as we men do whenever we think properly at all, it, too, would instinctively talk. Its throat would present no mechanical difficulty. Man does make this distinction, and therefore if man is born deaf and dumb he can be taught to express his thought upon his fingers, because, in Bible language, man is not merely a living animal, but a spirit as well; and in man's power of consciously reflecting upon his existence, and of distinguishing between his central self and his thoughts and his acts, lies his radical distinctness from the very highest brutes. And thus, I say, that we are spirits is a fact of consciousness; and as we observe that our life, as spirits, although most intimately bound up with our bodily organs, does not depend on them, so we reasonably infer that it will not perish with them.

We do not need a voice from heaven to suggest to us that our whole being will not be destroyed at the moment when our heart shall cease to beat. But considering the pressure of the things of sense, considering the indecision with which we men habitually lay hold on the unseen if it be not certified to us from without, we are mercifully—we are altogether—lifted up by the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour out of this region of high probabilities that commend themselves to the reason, in favour of our immortality; into that of certainties which are known to be such to faith. And this is why it is so solemn a thing to be with any man who is about to take his departure for the eternal world, especially to be with a dying Christian. He is yet, it may be, fully conscious, but upon his face we read the sentence of death. Soon, we say to ourselves—in a few hours, it may be sooner—soon he will have seen that world from which men do not return. He will have entered on that stage of existence which awaits us all, of which we know little except its reality. At such times the unseen sheds a new, an awful, a blessed light often (God be thanked) upon the scene. We stand, like Elisha, close, it may be, to one who has already more to offer us than have common men. 'What shall I do for thee?' is the language of those eyes which follow us so inquiringly round the sick-room, of those lips which would but cannot speak. 'What shall I do for thee before I be taken from thee?'

Surely we, too, must ask for a double portion, if it may be, of the character of Christ's dying servant. Much is given at such times to those who have the courage to ask for much, to those who watch with the eye of faith for the chariots of fire and the horses of fire on which strong and loving souls are carried up from a bed of suffering

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into the rest of Paradise. But in any case we must ask for a deeper sense of the meaning and responsibilities of life and of the world which is to follow it. We must ask for pardon and peace if, as yet, we have it not, through that atoning blood which was shed to preserve us, too, body and soul, unto everlasting life. Even Elisha, devoted as he already was, was another man after witnessing the translation of Elijah. And there are scenes in every life which ought to send us back to work and to duty with twice our previous sense of the importance of what we have to do in this stage of our existence, and with a new and deeper value for those heavenly aids which enable us, if we will, to do it.

H. P. LIDDON.

Are you Awake?

(Sermon for Chilaren.)

The child is not awaked. 2 KINGS iv. 31.

MANY of you are, or have been, quite as dead, in the truest sense of that word, as was the boy who lay still and white in the prophet's chamber at Shunem, and need to be awaked quite as much as he did. I am not now speaking to the very little ones among you. No doubt even in the youngest of you there are evil germs which may unfold themselves by and bye, until you too die, or fall asleep, to God and goodness. No doubt even you often do wrong, and know that it is wrong while you do it. But, for all that, I do not call you dead if God is near and present to you, if you think of Him as your Father, if you are sorry when you do wrong, if you are quickly and easily moved to love, admire, and imitate whatsoever is right and brave and noble. It is a mere libel, or a mere mistake, to call those dead whose hearts are still so sensitive to every spiritual and kindly touch, to whom the heavenly world is still so close and true and attractive that their angels stand nearest the Throne, and of whom the Saviour Himself has said, 'Of such is the Kingdom of heaven.' No: even the narrow and austere Jewish rabbis did not call a boy 'a son of the law,' and hold him to be fully responsible for himself, until his thirteenth birthday; and even that was one, if not two years, earlier than the Jewish law required, and I am not going to be more harsh and stern with you than they were.

I. But there are some of you, many of you, who have lived long enough, and have long enough been knocked about in the little world of school, to have grown somewhat dull and dead. God is not so real, and He is not so much, to you as He was. You are not so ashamed of doing wrong as you were: it may be even that there are some things which you know your masters or parents would think

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wrong that you take a foolish pride in hiding from them. Perhaps you are even drawn to do things simply because you are forbidden to do them. Perhaps you are not really sorry, but hard and defiant, when you are found out, though you still go through the forms of penitence. Perhaps you eagerly do things when you are not seen, which you would not dare to do if you knew that any eye was upon you. Perhaps you are getting greedy, selfish, hard to please; or, like Gehazi, covetous of the good things which others have, but you have not.

And then, some of you, if you are not dead, are at least fast asleep. Your spiritual faculties and affections rust unused, or they are seldom used. You are dreaming, and pursuing dreams. For what we often call 'the real world,' the world outside us, is not truly the real one: but the world within it, and behind it, and beyond it. Thousands of men pass into this outward world, and pass out of it, every day; and they can only take with them what they have stored up within themselves. So that it is this inner world which is the real world to us, the world in which alone true and enduring treasures are to be found. And if any of you think the outside world—in which you only stay for a few years at most—to be the real one, and are living only or mainly for that, while the inward and spiritual world, in which you are to abide for ever, is unreal and unattractive to you;—what can we say of you except that you are fast asleep, and do not see things as they are, and mistake dreams for realities and realities for dreams? You have eyes, but they are not open. There are faculties in you capable of apprehending the true realities, but as yet they are not in exercise. Like the Shunamite's son, who was both asleep and dead, you need to be awaked; you need to be quickened unto life.

II. How are you to know whether you are alive and awake, or asleep and dead? In a hundred different ways—such ways as these. If you are at school, and set yourself to learn your lessons well and to get on fast—as I hope you all do—you may have very different motives for doing your duty in school. You may care only to beat your class-fellows, to stand above them, to get on in your little world and be looked up to: and if that be your aim or motive, it is a selfish one, and you are asleep and dead to the true motives and aims by which you ought to be inspired. But if you are eager to learn because you wish to do your duty, and to fit yourselves for larger duties by and bye, because you want to become wiser, better, more useful, or because you want to please your parents and show that you are not unmindful of how much they have done for you, or because you want to please God and to prove that you thankfully remember how much He has done for you and given you, then you are

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alive and awake : for, now, your motives reach up out of and beyond this present world, which will soon pass away, and you are trying to prepare yourselves for any life, or any world to which it may please God to call you.

And, lastly, some of you are growing up into men and women, and have to go out into the world to earn your daily bread. Are you diligent, thoughtful, eager to advance ? Why, so far, well. But you may be diligent, observant, quick to seize every advantage and opportunity, mainly because you hate work and hope to get free from it the more quickly ; or because you want to lay by money, to get rich, to make a fortune ; or because you are bent on distinction, reputation, applause. And, in that case, you are dead and asleep ; you are not alive and awake to the best things, the most satisfying, the most enduring. For this life, for which alone you are living, will soon be over and the riches which have wings soon use them and fly away. On the other hand, you may be diligent, thoughtful, quick to seize occasion as it rises, because it is your duty, because you want to train and accomplish yourselves, because you long to be of some use in the world, and in every world, that may come after it, because you love God and hold His law to be the true law of life, His peace its true end. And, in that case, you are alive and awake. If you should die to-night, our Father would not have sorrowfully to say of you, ‘The child is not awake,’ and feel that He must put you into hard and painful conditions which will rouse and sting you to a sense of all that you have lost and thrown away. And if you should live to be never so old, still all your life will be a useful and happy preparation for the better life to come.

And now that you know how to answer this question, let me once more press the question upon you, ‘Are you awake?’ Let me beg you to ask it of yourselves, until you can reply, ‘Yes, thank God, we are awake ; we are really alive : and, therefore, we shall never die.’

S. COX.

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The Catholic Church.

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could nothing cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief. If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, nothing should be impossible unto you. S. MATTHEW xvii. 19. 20.



THE first intention of the Church is to create a saintly life. Her second is to influence the multitude for good. In all systems of ethical philosophy, I suppose, the same order is observed. The perfect state is first in idea, though it may be second in time. It is thus that the paradox of Aristotle is proved to be reasonable, when he says that the political man is first, the individual second. As to priority in time, in the natural world the theory of evolution postpones the perfection of the creature till an indefinite and almost interminable period to give room for development; but if the gospel history of our Lord Jesus Christ be true, do you think we have any evidence there against the statement that the creation of the saints is the primary intention of the Church, and that not in idea only but also in time?

Christianity began with the person of Christ. In Him was seen the perfect life from the beginning. It is true, and a blessed proof of His real Manhood it is, that He 'increased in wisdom and in favour with God and man.' He was the Ideal Man from the moment of His Incarnate Presence in the world. Saintliness in Him was visible to angels and men from His infancy. Then His home became the Church of the saints—of Elizabeth, Zacharias, John the Baptist, Joseph, the blessed Mother of Jesus; and the world knows this to be the Holy Family. Then, again, His consecration to public life was given by the good pleasure of the Father, who from heaven spoke to Him with a welcome and joy with which He could only address the holiest. His first act was the maintenance of a perfect innocence against the tempter, resistance to whom proves the character of the saint. His first teaching was the counsel of perfection—a rule for engraving the lines of ideal character on the practice of the living men and women walking upon the earth in those sublime beatitudes which define a purity and perfection beyond the dreams of theorists;

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and, above all, when He came to reform society and to convert the nations, and to make a disposition for the Kingdom of heaven, He chose a few to be near Him and He gave His mind and a large portion of His time to the training and perfecting them as saints. This is the standard He sets before them—not activity in world-bettering, not the energy of eloquence, not the wealth of knowledge, which to the wise and prudent of the world is above all price, but the attractive genius of sanctity. These are His definition of their high character and work as it is to be. ‘Ye are the salt of the earth ;’ ‘the light of the world ;’ ‘a city set upon a hill.’ They are to be judges of the world, the few who find the narrow way, moralists who are to support the laws of ancient ethics in purity, forgiveness, patience, charity, self-sacrifice, in the heroic life of suffering, in justice to the poor, in hope for the degraded, in antagonism to the rich and powerful when they tyrannise over the good, in command over the resources of the spiritual world, in expelling evil spirits, in representing God and justifying His rule of mercy and of judgment. They were to reign as kings and serve as priests far beyond the capacity and the scope of the very greatest whom the world had known. Thus was the Church launched on her career to prove that her first intention was to create saints.

I. But, then, beside the personal authority of Christ, and the signature impressed by His example, we have the reasonableness of this principle, in reference to three points. First, no other principle of Christian action is adequate to the claim of human life. Mediocrity cannot meet the demand ; no graduated scale of goodness which fails of perfection will satisfy man’s desire. Had the human race one voice for the utterance of its needs, it would not cry for a moderate Christianity ; conscious of its high lineage and noble destiny, it speaks in this high tone when the critic challenges it to declare its function : ‘To this end have I been born, and to this end have I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.’ And if the Pilates of the world ask, ‘What is truth ?’ will humanity answer, ‘Mediocrity’ ? No. A conscience will never satisfy which has life enough to cause unrest but fails in power to create peace and to give liberty for happy work. Man hath memory and can recall the first intention of his creation. Man has imagination, and can climb great heights of dignity. He will stay with his Saviour in the nether world, while He eats with the publican and ministers to the sinner ; but he will rise with Him in turn to the summit of the mountain, and feel in his amazement that it is good for him to be there. One life alone is commensurate with the capacity and want of man—the life of the saint. The saints are not prodigies in the world ; they are the normal expression of the natural life of the

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redeemed. None else can bear true witness to the truth of humanity.

It follows, then, to look now to ourselves. If the Church in any age or country has no message to the saints, she leaves the deepest springs in man's nature unopened; she fails to elicit his highest faculties; his purest affections are unvisited, his best happiness marred, his liberty cramped; he is disfranchised of his birthright, robbed of his inheritance. Have you ever known how a young man, beginning to feel his power and conscious of great ability, will look back on the school, or college, or teacher which, in those first precious years of his education, failed altogether to do him justice, snubbed him, gave him no stimulus to higher energy, set nothing before him but a pallid mediocrity? What soreness, and stifled resentment, and bitterness, and despair works in that man's mind as he thinks what he has lost by the small-mindedness of another! And in that great day when all the works of the Church shall pass away and be as nothing, and the generations of men stand before the Righteous Judge, and judgment begin, as it will, at the house of God, think what will be the sentence on the Church of any particular age or place in Christendom which has been proud of its world-bettering and its respectability, but has failed to cast out evil spirits from the suffering as only saints can cast them out, and has given her mind to covering a larger surface at the cost of neglecting her first duty—to do justice to the noblest capacities of her children and to educate them into saints. Such chastening thoughts as these will not make us, with all our blessings, less faithful in the use of them, less humble, less wise.

II. Here let me pass to another point which fixes in our minds the reasonableness of our blessed Lord's intention that the Church should be the creator of saints. God's way from the beginning hath been to work from the few to the many—to act upon the many by the few. For instance, God is a covenant God. The mercies of God are covenanted mercies. Revelation tells us nothing, however we may choose to speculate, of the uncovenanted mercies. Now, a covenant implies selection; it presumes the gathering together of a few. Again, nothing is plainer than the historical fact that Christ Jesus in His ministry began to elect a few and to educate them, as has been said already, in the highest forms of saintliness. In the foreground of the gospel there are two classes of people broadly defined—the teachers and the taught, the disciples and the multitude. Now, how can you justify, by the laws of reasonable prudence, Christ's method of reforming the world—His method being the exercise of personal influence for three short years in a narrow strip of land on the borders of an inland sea, and then retiring out of sight of the world in what the world would call shame and disappointment? How can

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you justify the reasonableness of this method except on this principle, that He deliberately created a saintly character in a few whom He could trustfully employ to act upon the many? This is just what our blessed Lord did, and the Catholic Church is the result.

III. Now, I have asked you to consider the necessity of the saint's existence on these two grounds, and now I will speak more briefly of another. Do not let us think of the society around us only, or of ourselves only, and benefit by the presence of the saints; but the desire of God is to be considered. Now, what does the will of God require? Why did He make man in His own image? What was the travail of the soul of the Incarnate Son which we men are born to satisfy? What is the intention of the Holy Ghost when He takes of the things of Christ, and brings them to us? It is that men should be recovered to a life of union with God. The mission of the Holy Ghost has two intentions—one towards the Father and the Son, one towards man. The Holy Ghost longs to fulfil the will of the Father in the creation and redemption of our life, and to recompense Jesus our Saviour for all that men did to Him so bitterly upon the earth. Every saint passing from mediocrity upwards to the perfect life is another revelation of God to the world. 'Men take note of him that he hath been with Jesus,' and fastening their eyes upon him, see in his face the face of an angel, and, by the vision of saintliness in the Church that is amongst you, angels themselves, though they live in the presence of God, learn more of Him whom they see and worship, for, as S. Paul described one function of the Church in the town of Ephesus, it is 'to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.'

ARCHDEACON FURSE.

Human Intolerance and Divine Patience.

And he said unto them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him: Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up? But he saith: Nay, lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn. S. MATTHEW xiii. 28, 29, 30.

FROM this parable we learn how like the Kingdom of heaven is to the world as we see it and know it. It is disturbed by the presence of evil growths. In nature we find this disturbance and contradiction of forces and effects in great variety. The products of the same soil are alternated by growths that nourish and sustain life and by noxious and poisonous forms of vegetation. If we turn to

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the world of human life and history, we find the most improved civilisation disturbed by the intermixture of good and evil.

This parable, too, gives a bird's-eye view of the whole world, with all its contrasts of virtue and vice, of grace and wickedness, and, however widely they may range, they must be reduced in the last resort to these two elements, tares and wheat—the thing right and the thing wrong. But the analogy or comparison of the parable must not be pushed too far.

‘An enemy hath done this!’ What enemy? How did he come? might be asked. The Saviour intended no metaphysical inquiry, and, therefore, He gave no account of the when and how evil came into the world. The evidence of the enemy is everywhere. The presence of evil is proof enough of the adversary; account for it how we will, by personal agency or moral disorganisation, or the necessary defection of limited powers. It is here, a problem, as vast as our humanity, and no solution is so simple and so thorough as the one in this parable. An enemy hath done this! The intermixture of good and evil being the state of things all round, it is interesting to know how men would deal with it, even good men, and how God actually deals with it.

I. What men would do. ‘Wilt Thou then that we go and gather them up?’ It should always be remembered that there is an arrogance of virtue, as well as the sauciness and presumption of vice. Men may have pure intentions, but their proposed methods of giving effect to their intentions may corrupt them. It is of the essence of pride and effrontery for men to propose to do God's work in their own way. Christ's way of doing God's work was: ‘Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done.’ These men in the parable not only sought permission, but proposed a plan for dealing with the tares. They sought permission rather than submission, and their plan had the charm of a prompt revenge upon the enemy. Revenge is not only sweet, but safe too, we think, if we can persuade ourselves we are doing God's service by it. There is a fierce joy in the man's heart who can gratify his enmity under cover of uprooting an evil.

On this principle too, we should all be saints, full of the faith which removes mountains, and of the impulsive generosity which bestows our goods on the poor and gives our bodies to be burned, if only we can escape the law of charity and pluck up some tares that have been growing up in the gardens and fields of our pleasures, or fancies, or bigotries. Take this last matter of bigotry as we see it developed in society, and Church history and life to-day. The arrogant language of bigotry has always been ‘Wilt Thou that we go and gather them up?’ When the early Church had left its first

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beautiful unity, that unity which by its grace won the admiration of the heathen Romans—this language was uttered by the different sects. Each one appealed to God for power to pluck up the other, and readily persuaded itself that the other was a tare. The spirit of arrogant self-appointment has grown up through the ages of the Church. In our day it has culminated in the Roman Catholic Church in the logical development of pretensions too grievous to be borne by any country in Europe. And the germ of all human intolerance and bigotry is here in the question of these men in the parable, 'Wilt Thou, then, that we go and gather them up?'

Many of the world's wars have been radically ecclesiastical in their origin. Provinces have been scathed, fields reddened with blood, cities blackened which had shone with the brightest achievements of civilisation, and homes unnumbered shadowed by death, and convulsed with agony, and all this the work of men who said, 'Wilt Thou that we go and gather them up?' What this principle can do on a large scale it can do proportionately on a small one. The acorn virtually holds the oak, and a false desire to do God's service as the means of gratifying this passion of bigotry has turned saints into devils, and is fraught with possibilities of ruin to society and the Church. Rather let us say: 'What wilt Thou have me to do?'

II. What would be the result of such impatient action? 'Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them.' Men may not only do evil that good may come, but good and evil may be the result, and, if judged by this, may be condemned as tares. The intermixture of good and evil by the conditions of life and the relations and institutions of society is a problem and a difficulty. If we could cut down evil as the mower cuts the grass, if its forms all grew together, the field of the world could soon be cleared.

But this intermixture of good and evil forbids rashness and haste. The imperfect methods of human justice often involve confusion of the bad and good. A murderer, a robber, a forger, cannot be smitten alone; his wife, his children, his friends, must feel the blow also. The divine method is free from such defects. Besides, every man, perhaps, is a tare to some other man in some aspects of his character. None are all wheat in human judgment, and not so even in fact. Men may be growing in good and evil at the same time. A man may become more pious and at the same time more selfish. As age increases he may look oftener at things unseen, but yet have a firmer grip upon those that are seen.

You may meet with men who are gentle, but not particularly truthful; devout and conscientious—men of integrity, but harshness

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embitters their most honest deeds—men of rich sympathy, but impulsively and passionately unjust. All have some taint, fault, or defect, even as the loveliest flowers or fruits have some speck, or some tainted crimp on the leaf. And if we would remove all the tares, we must remove one another off the face of the earth, or consign one another to certain conventional hells, social, political, or sectarian. The truth is, though we are no better than we should be, yet we are unquestionably better than we think each other to be. Hence comes the grand function of the Church—preferring one another in love, nurturing the feeblest virtues, feeding babes in Christ, helping each other on to the perfect stature of men in Christ Jesus.

III. What the Master does. ‘Let both grow together until the harvest.’ How Godlike is this large patience, like the firmament of heaven, serene and vast, while the storm of men’s passions rages beneath. And yet the very largeness and fulness of this patience irritate us.

There are certain crimes committed by certain men which perhaps no human law can touch, and we feel as if God ought to come out of His hiding-place and smite or brand the criminal as in the case of Cain. But if the man we think of was branded, he would perhaps be the wrong man, or, not knowing the whole circumstances of the case, we might overwhelm the most urgent extenuations. Men cannot be divided absolutely into wheat and tares. Some are neither. They are a sort of middle growth. None are all wheat. ‘There is none righteous, no not one.’ Are any all tare? Has the enemy saturated every fibre of the human soul with his malignity? In the darkest cases known some heavenly growth has been found, like Mungo Park’s flower in the African desert. Some men are not far from the Kingdom of heaven who yet remain in the domain of worldliness. There are some to-day on the flood of a spiritual enthusiasm who to-morrow may be given up to wicked indifference or sinful lust. Men may be Davids in infamy and devotion, Peters in fervour and boldness, in falsehood and cowardice at different periods of life. What should we have done with these men? What did God do?

‘Let both grow together till the harvest.’ This partial and contradictory and conflictive development in men’s characters, shows the wisdom as well as the goodness of God’s patience. If He acted in the way of our impulses and false conclusions, the world would be thrown into moral confusion a thousandfold more distressing than that which we witness. We want the ripe wheat of harvest before the husbandry of moral discipline, and the spring and summer of opportunity have done their work. We are no better than children who rake up their seeds to see if they are growing.

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God waits for the harvest in every life as stars wait for the night, and as the hills for the morning's dawn. He waited from all eternity for the time of man's creation. He waited for the fulness of the time to come, which gave the world the Lord Jesus Christ. He has waited through the uprisings, storms, and follies of human passion and wickedness. He has waited through the faithlessness and inconstancy of the Church, and waits still for the harvest, for the end of human folly, for the subjugation of every phase and form of evil, and for the maturity of the human soul in holiness, truth and love. He waits now to be gracious, waits to forgive our sins, waits to help our infirmities, and waits to be patient and just towards all our unintentional and wilful shortcomings. Calmly and grandly He says: 'Let both grow together till the harvest.'

The great spiritual uprising and regeneration of humanity goes on. Tares will be consumed in various fires, used for the purification and exaltation of men's characters, and the wheat shall yet grow to its perfection in form, beauty, and fruitfulness to the praise and glory of His grace.

JOSEPH SHAW.

Christ, the Physician.

(Sermon preached before the International Medical Congress.)

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. S. MATTHEW ix. 35.

NOTHING in the Lord's work was accident; all was deliberate, all had an object. Nothing in His work was inevitable, except so far as it was freely dictated by His wisdom and His mercy. To suppose that this union in Him of prophet and physician was determined by the necessity of some rude civilisation, such as that of certain tribes in Central Africa and elsewhere, or certain periods and places in mediæval Europe when knowledge was scanty, when it was easy and needful for a single person at each social centre to master all that was known on two or three great subjects, this is to make a supposition which does not apply to Palestine at the time of our Lord's appearance. The later prophets were prophets and nothing more, neither legislators, nor statesmen, nor physicians. In John the Baptist we see no traces of the restorative power exerted on some rare occasions by Elijah and Elisha, and when our Lord appeared, dispensing on every side cures for bodily disease, the sight was just as novel to His contemporaries as it was welcome. Nor are His

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healing works to be accounted for by saying that they were only designed to draw attention to His message, by certificating His authority to deliver it, or by saying that they were only symbols of a higher work which He had more at heart in its many and varying aspects—the work of healing the diseases of the human soul. True it is that His healing activity had this double value: it was evidence of His authority as a divine teacher, it was a picture in detail addressed to sense of what, as a restorer of our race, He meant to do in regions altogether beyond the sphere of sense.

I. But these aspects of His care for the human body were not, I repeat, primary: they were strictly incidental. We may infer with reverence and with certainty that His first object was to show Himself as the deliverer and restorer of human nature as a whole—not of the reason and conscience merely, without the imagination and the affections—not of the spiritual side of men's nature, without the bodily; and therefore, He was not merely teacher, but also physician, and therefore and thus He has shed upon the medical profession to the end of time a radiance and a consecration which is ultimately due to the conditions of that redemptive work, to achieve which He came down from heaven teaching and healing. This, the motto of our Lord's life, is the motto also of the profession of medicine, which alike not merely heals but teaches. It also is in its way a ministry of prophecy, with truths and virtues specially intrusted to it, that it may recommend and propagate them. It is little to say of this great profession in our time that it is a keeper and teacher of intellectual truth. We all know that it has furnished of late years to literature some of its most enterprising efforts in the way of speculative thought, and the remarkable address with which this Congress was opened, will have informed the public generally, while it evidently reminded the audience which listened to it, of the additions which within the last score of years medical science has made to human knowledge—additions so vast, so intricate, as to be for the moment well-nigh unmanageable, and of the immense perspectives which are thus opening before it. On these high things it would be impossible to dwell here, but as a prominent teacher of truth, medical science, I may be allowed to say, has ever powers and responsibilities which are all its own. The physician can point out with an authority given to no other man the present operative force of some of the laws of God. The laws of nature, as we call them, are not less the law and will of God than are the Ten Commandments. Nay, that moral law finds its echo and its counter-sign in this physical world; it is justified by the natural catastrophes that follow on its neglect. It is not the clergyman, but the physician, who can demonstrate the sure connection between unrestrained indulgence and the decay of health and

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life, who can put his finger precisely upon the causes which too often fill even with strong young men the corridors, not only of our hospitals, but also of our lunatic asylums, who can illustrate by instances drawn from experience the tender foresight of moral provisions which at first sight may appear to be tyrannical or capricious. To be able to show this in detail, to give men thus the physical reasons for moral truth—this is a great prophetic power, this is a vast capacity which we might well envy in its possessors, this is a vast responsibility which they who wield it like other prophets must one day account for.

II. Consider the destiny of the body. As we Christians gaze at it we know that there awaits it the humiliation of death and decay; we know also that it has a future beyond; the hour of death is the hour of resurrection. Beyond the humiliations of the coffin and the grave there is the life which will not die. The reconstruction of the decayed body presents to us no greater difficulties than its original construction, and if we ask the question how it will be, we are told, upon what is for us quite sufficient authority, that our Lord Jesus Christ 'shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.' And thus in this life the body is like a child that has great prospects before it, and we are interested, and we respect it accordingly. But you can add to these motives for reverence another, which appeals not to faith, but to experience. It has been finely said that among the students of nature irreverence is possible only to the superficial. You are too conscious of the great powers in whose presence you move and work, of the mysteries above, around, within you, of the magnificent and exhaustless subjects whose fringes you seem only to have touched when you know most about them, to escape from the awe which all true knowledge, with its ever-present consciousness of a much larger ignorance, must always inspire. In this matter science, whatever be her immediate interests, is ever the same. You can understand Pascal saying the highest effort of reason is to admit that there is an infinity of things which altogether and perpetually transcend it. You can understand our own Newton comparing his finest achievements to those of the child playing with the waves as they break upon the sand. The temper of true science is ever the same, and as you move along the awful frontier where the world of matter shades off into the world of spirit, not the least service that you could do to the men of this generation would be to teach them the mysteriousness of what they see and what they are, to prepare them to do some sort of justice to what revelation has to say about what they do not see and what they will be.

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III. And lastly, the profession of medicine is from the nature, I had almost dared to say from the necessity, of the case a teacher of benevolence. Often must we have witnessed the transformation—one of the most striking and beautiful to be seen in life—by which the medical student becomes the medical practitioner. We may have known a medical student who is reckless, selfish, or worse, and we presently behold him as a medical practitioner leading a more unselfish and devoted life than any other member of society. ‘What,’ we ask, ‘is this? Is this something akin surely to ministerial ordination that has wrought this altogether surprising change, that has brought with it such an inspiration of tenderness and sympathy?’ The answer, apparently, is that now, as a practitioner, he approaches human suffering from a new point of view. As a student he looked on it as something to be observed, discussed, analysed, if possible, anyhow, lectured upon; now as a practitioner he is absorbed by the idea that it is something to be relieved. This new point of view, so profoundly Christian, will often take possession of a man’s whole moral nature, and give it nothing less than a totally new direction; and thus, as a rule, the medical practitioner is at once a master and a teacher of the purest benevolence, not only or chiefly those great heads and lights of the profession, whose names are household words in all the universities of Europe, and who have some part of their reward, at any rate, in a homage which neither wealth nor birth can possibly command, but also, at least in this country, and pre-eminently so, the obscure country doctor, whose sphere of fame is his parish or his neighbourhood, and upon whom the sun of publicity rarely or never sheds its rays. His life is passed chiefly in the homes of the very poor, and amidst acts of the kindest and most self-sacrificing service. For him the loss of rest and the loss of health is too often nothing less than a law of his work; and as he pursues his career so glorious and yet so humble, from day to day, his left hand rarely knows what his right hand doeth. And yet such men as these, in the words of Ecclesiasticus, maintain the state of the world while all their desire is in the work of their craft. They pour oil and wine, as can do few or none others, into the gaping wounds of our social system; they bind and heal, not merely the limbs of their patients, but the more formidable fractures, which separate class from class, and unless He whom now we worship on His throne in heaven is very unlike all that He was eighteen hundred years since on earth, such lives as these must be, in not a few cases, very welcome indeed to Him, if only for the reason that they are so like one very conspicuous aspect of His own. H. P. LIDDON.

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Elijah's Mantle.

And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him. 2 KINGS ii. 14.

ELISHA was anxious to make his work in his day and generation to be one of service, and his anxiety showed itself in the petition he presented. He desired to be filled with that spirit which would fit him for his toil. The answer which was given by Elijah was, that he could have that spirit of fitness if he had another spirit, viz., that of insight. If his capacity was such that he could, as it were, read beneath the surface of life and understand its deep and hidden meaning, then the power of that spirit would be bestowed upon him. In the event, he proved he had that power of insight, and now the time had come when he must put into effect the powers he desired. Immediately he was thrown upon his own responsibility, Elijah having departed from him, he was confronted by an obstacle. The river Jordan rolled between him and the sphere of his work. Had his prayer been fully answered or not? Could he break down this obstacle, and enter in and take possession of the sphere of duty, where his heart desired to dwell? It was a moment of crisis, but he remembered the mantle of Elijah, and forgot for a moment the eyes that were upon him. He remembered only the strength which had made his master strong, and the difficulties disappeared, the obstacles were vanquished, and not only so, but the homage of the sons of the prophets was received. The effort put forth by Elisha at that time was the assertion of his own personality, and this it is which a man was bound to make at some time or another in the face of the world. A new generation, as it were, stood face to face with the difficulties which were peculiarly its own. The land of promise, which was often the land of duty, lay on the other side of the flood, and it was the legacy of the past which it was for Elisha to appropriate, and make his own, for just in proportion as he was able to grasp and turn into a new weapon the legacy he had received, and to remember what need there was of breathing his own personality into it, was he capable and fit to be a prophet of his age. It was in the realisation of his own personality that he found power. When he had gained this victory, and the confidence and consciousness of himself, then it was that the sons of the prophets made their submission to him. Is not this then the one thought which may well occupy our minds—the assertion of our own personality? For a moment let me go back. Sometimes when we face our age, we say to ourselves, looking at life and its various circumstances and significances, what we really need amongst us is a prophet of the nature of Elijah. Men are conscious that there

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are many things they hold in high esteem, but it is that of conventionality and not of truth. They long for some prophet of flame to come, that should unmask these hollow things, and show them as they are, and tell the Pharisees and Sadducees of the age that there is weakness and rottenness in their system. At other times men look into the face of the world, and say that not an Elijah, but an Elisha is needed.

That which distinguished Elisha from Elijah was his diffusive power. Elijah was solitary, and his eccentricity was his power, but Elisha blended easily with all classes. He belonged to the court as its adviser; he belonged to the people as their aid and assistant. In every class and department of life he made his power to be felt, and in an age in which they might say of a truth that social disintegration was threatened, surely the prophet must be one who could hold touch with all classes. It was an Elisha that was needed, but if Elisha was to discharge his work he must be gifted with insight. No surface views would do; the man who read life only from his own little section, and mistook the waves that fell on the coast for the great drift-tide which flowed beneath the surface, was not the man that could minister to his age. Nor was it only needful that he should have this gift of insight, of penetrating beneath the surface, he must have also distinct personality, he must be able to assert himself in the world. That is what we are taught by Elisha. But do we not mark also that it is seldom that men become aware of their personality or are encouraged to assert it at all? They are separated by physical features from one another, but how slowly do they disentangle their own personal, moral force, and really assert it in the world. The only motive is when some crisis comes, and yet all along, the catechism of our own Church has been teaching us that one of the duties of our life is to recognise ourselves as ourselves. When we are asked to state our name, before any thought of Christian truth or doctrine is poured into our understanding, is it not to remind us of this, that in the highest aspect of life we must be ourselves and not others? But I said it was only in a crisis that we are encouraged, or should I say coerced, to assert this responsibility. When some change comes upon our life, and we are thrown upon our own resources, and we must act for ourselves, then we stand for the first time consciously alone. Stand for the first time consciously alone, do I say? Yes, and the more consciously alone because in the eyes of a crowd. And then we discover how very weak had been the resources at our command. We had lived as Elisha had, dependent largely upon the intellectual superiority and moral fervour of some great religious teacher. When he spoke, all things seemed easy and difficulties vanished.

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His arguments were clear and incisive, and his logic was irresistible. When we confronted some Jordan we found it not hard to cross over the flood, for he with his mantle split the wave before us, and we passed over on dry land. The arguments that seemed to hinder us were torn in shreds; we caught his moral fervour; and we thought the victories of his intellect were our own. But when we stood alone and faced these things for ourselves we found that the life which we believed to be ours was only reflected from him; we found that the warmth which throbbed within was only a contagious warmth; that our enthusiasm was not evolved out of our own personality, and, therefore, we found ourselves more painfully situated, because the powers we believed we possessed were no longer ours. We were like men trading upon borrowed capital. The lender had withdrawn his aid, and we knew how slender our resources were. Such a time brought its snares, and there were two temptations immediately weighing upon us. There was the suppression of personality due to vanity, and the suppression of personality due to mistrust, and it might be to imitateness. We are in danger the moment we feel ourselves in such difficulty. The moment we become proud of any talent we cease to be able to use it with true significance. To pass by the legacy which has fallen at our feet, the rich heritage of the accumulated knowledge, experience, resources, and faith of all past ages, is not merely egotism, but it is unscientific egotism. To ignore the past is impossible, and our reaching forward to grasp the heritage of the future depends upon our taking our stand upon the highest place to which past generations have brought us. We cannot afford to fling aside the mantle of Elijah, but neither must we imagine that Elisha, having received the mantle of Elijah, could forget his personality, and think that by virtue of the mantle he might charm his way across, without any need of individual exertion, to the other side. Imitateness will never bring about true success, and it is the translating of our life into a mere echo. When it takes the form of shirking the responsibilities of life, and asking some incantation to take the place of the exercise of our own moral vigour, and the exertion of our own distinct individuality, it only degrades itself into superstition. Into neither of these snares did Elisha fall. He grasped the mantle of Elijah, and would not cast it from him—the legacy of the past was rich with power; but neither did he believe that it was surcharged with any mystic virtue that could relieve him of the necessity of personal exertion. He grasped it, made it his own, and it became a weapon in his hand. This is the secret of power. If you reflect you will see that the very moment when a man is himself, when he asserts himself, grasps the fact that

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he is a responsible agent, and has the courage to say he will be himself, in that moment his power over others is secure. It is the parable of the world. Personality wins power, and gains ascendancy over others, and it is a force which in all ages has proved mighty.

II. There are two powers which have played a leading part in the drama of the world's story, the one the power of thought, and the other the power of personality, but we all know it is personality we looked for. Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, told them that boys differed more in energy than in intellectual force; and what did that mean, but that the boy that could assert himself, who could blend his personality with his work, who had energetic forces beneath himself, would press his way in front of the boy who had mere intellectual capacity. Personality is a power, and it is energetic personality which makes its way in the world. Had Columbus only been a man of dreams he had failed, but by his own personal vigour, he forced the attention of the courts of Europe. It was not Sheridan's masterly parts and brilliant brain which were the key of his success, but his energy, and this it is that men have sung of, and that which the Roman poet sung of when he described 'the man of firm and righteous will who could rise above the clamour of the crowd.' In art we have the same illustration, and we can in a picture of a genius recognise the touches of distinct individuality. It is not merely ideas or great thoughts which have made men gain ascendancy over their fellows, but it is personality. Charles XII. of Sweden was not marked as an intellectual man, but it was his personality that pressed his troops to victory. But it may be said, do you not grant anything in the world's progress to thought? I grant everything you will. It is capable of revolutionising dynasties, but what I plead for is that thought without personality is incapable of progress. Thought may have a certain measure of sway, but it does not make its way, and become a power in the world, till there has been an apostle of that idea. We need a personality to give expression to it, and make it a power to the world. When we have linked together thought and personality, as in the career of Mahomet, then we have elements which give it strength and force and durability. There might be the thought of orthodoxy, but how weak it would be, unless it became incorporated in the flexible genius of an Athanasius. There was the germ of Reformation, but where would the Reformation be without the reformer? It is the same if we take free trade and the cause of humanity. The cause of humanity was an idea floating in men's minds, but they must have the personalising of the idea in a Wilberforce, and for free trade they must have a Cobden. Was there no reason for this? The reason is simple. In the first place men are very slow to attempt

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things when they remain only on paper. An abstraction is always difficult to the multitude. The majority of mankind cannot be philosophers, and even those who demand that their pet theories shall be put into working form. When a theory is brought forward we demand a working model, and as it were the personalising of the principle before we will believe it. Truth which is merely written in abstract phraseology does not enter the mind, but truth unfolded and put into concrete form, and in a way in which it can be personally recognised, becomes instantly a power. May I not ask you to say that this is the principle in religion? You may have a thousand conceptions thrown at your feet, and you are surprised, perplexed, or bewildered, but Christianity gives us a personalised creed; behind its creed there is a Person. The very force of Christianity lies in this, that behind all there stands the Christ, and just because it never is a real abstraction, but an incarnation, therefore has it been a power in the world. So because beneath the Christian creed an ever-living personality exists, so till He dies it will live. Do we pray for some new revelation, and are we going to turn our back upon a thing that looked bereft of its vigour and had lost all the life that once breathed within it, or are we going to say it needed not so much that some new robe of life should drop at our feet, as that we should put our personality into it, grasp what is true like men, and believe that religion is not a speculation but a practice? Let us turn truth into a weapon, and use it practically, because we have appropriated it personally, and behold a thousand things would gain a new meaning that seemed obscure before. For that is the very law of life, that in proportion as we take up a thing in the sense and for the purpose for which it was designed to be used, are we able to understand and grasp it. Let us assert our personality and be men. If we are confronting difficulties, by all means confront them, and not shirk them. Are we going to leave the land of our labour and work, because of this difficulty, this Jordan, which flowed between? God forbid. Knowing the weapons which lie at our feet we will not at the first difficulties turn whimpering away, and say things are not what we expected. Had Elisha done so he had been like some modern ones who worked and whimpered their difficulties into a review or an article, instead of facing them personally. Neither will we foolishly imitate. Whatever was best of the past must be made our own, and must be personalised. There is deep need of this, because the world has reached a stage in which everything presents itself in the mass. We look upon multitudes and nations, and individuals are lost. There is a tendency to think that movements proceed from great mass centres,

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the result being that men say the individual is nothing. We do not see the trees, as was said by one, because of the size of the forest, but this is the very time in which, if we are courageous, we shall come to the front and assert our personality. And is it not true, and increasingly true, that amongst us the movements which are rising to the front are movements of practical work. The age of speculativeness is being left behind; the age of practical duty is at hand. The exceeding bitter cry of the outcast has entered into our ears, and we have risen up to respond. We do not need to argue; we need to act. Life is too sad, men and women are too miserable; we must not wrangle longer, but must act. Let us take up whatever the heritage of the past was, the good and the true, and make it our own, let us translate it into action, and the things which seemed—and, perchance, they were—so very full of significance, will be seen in their true significance or their true insignificance, when we are acting, living, obedient men, bringing the life of Christ, and the power of Christ, and the spirit of Christ into our life. When men see this energy has entered into our life, will they not believe the power which lies behind, and will they not know that He must live in whose name we have gone forth. So was it spoken by one who never sang very loftily, but touched one strain which is worth our remembrance:

‘Think truly, and thy thoughts
Shall the world’s famine feed;
Speak truly, and each thought of thine
Shall be a fruitful seed;
Live truly, and thy life shall be
A great and noble creed.’

BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER.

The Succession of Gifts.

(Preached in Westminster Abbey.)

The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. 2 KINGS II. 15.

THE lessons from the Old Testament on this day conclude the long narrative which has for several Sundays occupied us concerning Elijah and Elisha. I propose to consider some of the lessons which may be derived from the story of the departure of Elijah and the succession of Elisha. These lessons are twofold, and quite distinct from each other.

I. First, there is a lesson which we are content to learn from the departure of every good or eminent man from amongst us. Elijah’s

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translation is intended to be a good man's death in its noblest aspect. In various ways God calls his servants away ; sometimes by a long, peaceful illness ; sometimes by a sudden stroke ; sometimes almost literally like Elijah, so, at least, we may say of the martyrs of old, in storm and whirlwind, by chariots and horses of fire. But in all the various forms in which that inevitable day may come upon us, what we should most wish for would be that death should, like Elijah's, seem to those whom we leave behind but as the completion of what they have already known. ' My father, my father,' said Elisha, as he saw him borne away, ' the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.' So Elijah had seemed in life a firmer defence and guard to his country than all the chariots and horsemen that were ever pouring in upon them from the surrounding tribes ; and so he seemed when he passed away lost in the flames of a fiery chariot and the fiery horsemen. It was no new admiration which that sight called forth from his disciple ; it was only the old abiding impression strengthened, fixed, stamped for ever by the closing scene. This is what death, death the universal event, should be to all, whether in recollection or in anticipation, the climax and the crown of life.

Some such thoughts as these crowd upon us, for example, when we here of the sudden and tragical deaths which, as by a flash of lightning, illuminate lives hitherto, perhaps, altogether unknown to us. When we sorrow for the loss of our brave countrymen, perishing amid flames and carnage in the desperate fight of Cabul, there is, at least, this mournful satisfaction amidst the darkness of despondency and the bitterness of recrimination, that the courage of their deaths was not unworthy of their lives, and that their lives will be known yet more keenly than if they had passed away amid the easy comforts of home and peace.

And such, again, are the thoughts of another kind which must occur from time to time in this great sepulchral church as in the deaths of the benefactors of their country and mankind. It is one of the very purposes of such deaths and such solemnities that they recall and place vividly before us the lesson of each life that passes away. While a man lives we use his energies, we reap the fruit of his labours, and we hardly remember who it was that showered those blessings upon us, we forget that those blessings were not always with us. The same hand of death which arrests the course of the beneficent existence, turns the lamp of truth on the character and the doings of him who has gone, and for the first time we recognise how much we owe to the self-denying labours, the incessant struggle against the sluggishness, the incredulity, the self-interest with which he had to contend. We feel that such men are the salt of the earth, which saves us from corruption. Such solemnities in this place of

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necessity come but seldom. It is now fifteen years since I have presided over this Abbey, and the number of eminent men who have been interred within its walls has been but fourteen, hardly one in the course of each year. It is this rarity which gives the significance of which I am speaking to each occasion; and as we look back over those fourteen funerals, we see that each one had its peculiar physiognomy, each struck a different chord in the heart of the country, each one revealed, as it were, a new character for us to contemplate. The event was the same to all, but the result which each left behind was far different. The vigorous patriotic statesman; the humorous and philanthropic novelist; the world-embracing astronomer; the high-minded scholar and historian; the most learned of English prelates; the gallant soldier of Afghanistan; the resolute statesman of the Punjab; the laborious and brilliant student of literature; the indefatigable explorer of the earth's primeval structure; the enterprising missionary traveller; the sweet musician; the restorer and builder of our churches; the reformer of the postal communication of the earth, these, each as they passed away gathered round their graves a separate class of mourners, each stamped a distinct mark on the recollection of the time, each left a peculiar vacancy to be supplied by those who followed.

II. And this leads me to the second part of the lesson of our subject, namely, the succession of gifts by which in different ages of the world the purposes of providence are carried on. You have heard it powerfully stated that the aim of every Christian, and of every man, is to press onwards towards the perfection of himself and of his race. But this lesson extends in a thousand directions, and is forced upon us by the problem of the extreme diversity of the forms and genius of philanthropy which exists in each succeeding generation. It is this duty, it is this possibility of carrying on the work of our predecessors which is grandly expressed in the story of Elijah's departure. We are oppressed at times with the thought of the vast difference between the mind of former generations and the mind of the present, and we fall into two extremes—one the error of trying to recall what there was good in the past by imitating its outward form and fashion; the other the error of thinking either that there was no good in the past, or that it is hopeless to do any good in the present. Look for a moment at the story of Elisha's succession; it is, at least, a frame in which we may place our thoughts. The mantle of Elijah descended on Elisha, so the story tells us, and from those words has been drawn a figure of speech by which in all future ages has been represented to our minds the succession of the gifts of God. Elisha, we are told, was himself altogether different in aspect, in character, in life, from his mighty prede-

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cessor. Unlike Elijah, his early life had not been in the wild forest of Gilead, but following peacefully his twelve yoke of oxen in the valley of the Jordan. His very appearance revealed the difference—not clothed in camel's hair; never wearing his master's mantle, even although it fell over him; not secluded in mountain fastnesses, but dwelling in king's palaces; lingering among the sons of the prophets, within the precincts of ancient colleges, catching his inspiration from the minstrel's art, embowered in the shade of the beautiful groves which overhang the spring that still bears his name; dwelling in some bower in Carmel or Dothan, or in some alcove in the plain of Esdraelon, with table spread and bed prepared for him by pious hands—the exact opposite of the wild and solitary life of his predecessor. Yes, in all this he had sought, earnestly sought, that the spirit of his master might descend upon him. He eagerly caught the mantle as it fell from him; he found that the Lord God of Elijah was still with him, when he was left in the wilderness to cross the Jordan alone; and when the sons of the prophets saw him approach, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha,' and they went to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him, and for sixty years from that time he instructed, warned, guided the people of Israel. His life, in this respect also unlike that of Elijah, was not spent in unavailing struggles, but in wide successes. He was sought out, not as the enemy, but the friend of kings. His works of mercy were known far and wide throughout the land, and when, at last, in good old age his last day came, he was not carried away, like Elijah, no one knew whither, but his sepulchre was well known, and wonders were wrought at it, continuing still the beneficence of his long and gentle life.

III. What is it we may learn from thinking of this? We learn the variety, and, at the same time, the continuous succession of the divine gifts. We learn that, in order to be useful in our generation, we need not copy the outward garb and manners of the former age, or of characters not congenial to ourselves. The spirit of departed greatness may rest on those who, in all outward respects, are quite unlike their Master. We might follow this through all the departments of social life. It was so in the constant succession of poets such as lie in yonder transept. Cowley was not like Spenser, nor was Gray like Milton, and yet each was devoted to his predecessors, and felt his whole soul inspired by their works. It was so in the case of the social reformers of whom we have just now spoke. They rest by the standard-bearer of Agincourt, beside the governor of Calais, whilst Calais still was ours. The contrast between the gifts of those ancient warriors on the one hand, and the gifts of such peaceful

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benefactors of society as James Watt and Rowland Hill on the other hand, is as wide as it is possible to conceive, and yet both alike were enrolled in a long service to their country and their God.

Not in missions, however zealous, nor in synodical gatherings, however well organised, and however each may be good in special times, and for special purposes, not in these, but in the parochial work of the clergy, is the work of the Church of England seen to its best advantage. Failure in this is the worst aspect of the Church; success in this is the Church's best test. In this the good spirit of Elijah is carried on by the better spirit of Elisha. To preserve and to improve in every branch of its efficiency, this element of a national Church is surely worthy of the effort of the most enlightened statesmen and the most zealous Churchmen. From this, the most endearing and the most enduring part of our profession, may our rising clergy not be diverted. In this, our best position of civilising and Christianising our countrymen, forsake us not, O God, in our old age when we are old and grey-headed, until we have shown Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to all them that are yet to come.

A. P. STANLEY.

Trust God: Trust Men.

Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. S. JOHN i. 42.

I. **T**HOSE words which I took for the text, strange, perhaps, as they might have sounded for the text of a sermon, must have sounded still stranger when Christ first spoke them to this man. It was a strange thing indeed to a man of the East, to whom a name always conveys significant associations, to a member of that Hebrew race with whose sacred literature the thought of change of name was always bound up with the thought of change of life, work, character, or mode of thought, a strange thing to say to a man the first time you met him. Peter had been brought to the Lord by his brother, and the first words that the Lord says to him are simply to tell him his name, and then to add these strange, suggestive, thoughtful words. Nevertheless, I think they show, if we think of them, one of those characteristics of Christ that perhaps we pass over constantly, but which, nevertheless, are second to none in the estimate of what He is and was as a man—I mean that insight into human character which marked all His dealings with His friends and with His foes.

And that quality of insight which we have seen marked the Master, and which, if we had time, we could show marked His dealing

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with individuals other than S. Peter, with the Apostles, with foes as well as friends, that insight of His is not necessarily a divine quality, not necessarily supernatural at all : it is a perfectly human quality. Insight of that sort may be defined perhaps as a compound of two things, of sympathy and of self-forgetfulness. It is a strange thing, but those two qualities, to my mind at least, are those which go to make up the great artist. He must have sympathy, he must be able, nay, he must be compelled, to forget himself, for that means, you see, the power, not only of feeling what other people feel, but of actually transporting yourself into their point of view, of being for the moment what they are. It is that which enables an artist to paint either portrait, historical picture, or anything else which requires the higher qualities of art, it is that which enables a man to see the outward flaws and defects of a character, and pierce to the rock which lies behind it, the capacity for loftier and holier things. Sympathy *plus* self-forgetfulness makes up insight ; and in the Lord Jesus Christ was not only sympathy combined with self-forgetfulness, but sympathy associated with an absolute want of taint of selfishness ; a sympathy so perfect, a sympathy so absolute, that no taint or sort of selfishness spoiling entered into it to mar its power ; and therefore you see how it was that the Lord could not only enter into the individual circumstances and character of a man like this, but He could get behind, so to speak, the human qualities of all the race ; He could see not only what an individual man was and might be, but He could see what humanity is and what humanity might be. And that is the reason, surely, why His words, why His whole life, are the teaching fit for all ages of the world and for all characters that men may bear.

II. Two points of the multiform moral of that story will serve to close. They are very simple—trust God, trust men. Trust God, for God trusts you, and, in spite of all that you may have done to betray Him, He still gives you cause to hope for future labour in His service, and cause to know that you have capacity to do something for your fellow-men and for Him. Trust Him, and learn to trust, from Christ's dealings with Peter, learn to trust more fully your fellow-men. It is not when a man has shown himself incapable of fulfilling a trust, unworthy of confidence, that you should immediately treat him as a man who has behaved worthily, admirably, but you should never let a man see you do not believe in his capacity for better things. You may not be able to trust him as if he were entirely faithful to you, but it may be with him as was the case with S. Peter, that the very man who has most shamefully betrayed is the very man to be most highly exalted in position and office. It may be so now and again, but the general rule in dealing

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with men who have betrayed us is to show them, not that we think them too bad to be trusted, too hopeless to be given any work to do, but to show them that they can, if they please, buy back our confidence, to show that we still believe they are capable of righteousness, developing, perhaps, in the slow discipline of future trial as the years burn out the baser self, and the ape and the tiger die in the man. And still, with that capacity for future failure lying on the surface and staring Him in the face, Christ told S. Peter he was a man of rock, building on the better side of him, building on what was strong and good in him rather than dwelling upon what was base and mean. It is soon enough, after a man has been placed face to face with what he may be, that he finds out the miserable imperfection of what he is. In our dealings with our fellow-men I know no better moral than Christ's dealing with this man, which I expressed in those two short sentences. In all your life, and in all your dealings, trust God, trust men.

H. C. SHUTTLEWORTH.

The Theme, the Manner, and the Object of Christian Preaching.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. COLOSSIANS i. 28.

ON looking at the verse three points seem to emerge distinctly from it. The theme, the manner, the object, of our preaching. First, what have we to preach? Christ. Then, how have we to preach Christ? In two ways: in the way of warning, and in the way of teaching. And, lastly, why we are to preach Christ? For the purpose of presenting every one of our people perfect in Christ Jesus in the great day of the Saviour's appearing and Kingdom.

Let us consider these points in order.

I. We have, says S. Paul, to preach Christ. Now, to preach Christ is not to mention Him, more or less frequently, in our sermons and discourses. It is obvious that there might be a perpetual recurring repetition of His sacred name, and yet that the entire tone of thought should be as antagonistic as possible to the teaching of the Saviour. It is obvious, again, that we might omit the name, keeping it, as it were, altogether in the background, and yet that the sentiments expressed should breathe so much of the Christ-like spirit as to bring the image of the unseen Saviour at once to the mental view, and to attract towards Him very strongly the desires and affections of the heart. The preaching of Christ, then, does not depend upon

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the frequent or infrequent mention of His name, but upon making Him the starting-point and foundation of the spiritual life ; or, as Scripture expresses it, 'the only hope of salvation of all the ends of the earth.' To preach Christ is to preach duty ; but to preach duty as connecting itself with, and as flowing from, the relation in which Christ stands to His believing people. To preach Christ is to preach doctrine ; but to preach doctrine as valuable only so far as it indicates and leads on to the personal Saviour. To preach Christ is to show what Christ is, to unfold the greatness of His person, and the glory of His work, and to show, also, how He intertwines Himself with the life of the true disciple, supplying out of His own fulness the wisdom to know, and the courage to dare, and the strength to persevere, and the power to bear the cross in the footsteps of a cross-bearing Master. And, finally, to preach Christ is to speak of the magnificence and beauty of a sinless heaven ; to tell of its streets of gold, and gates of pearl, and the voice of the multitude as the sound of many waters ; and yet to place in the midst of the splendid scene the figure of the glorified Saviour, as the one source of happiness, and one centre of adoration and praise, to His redeemed and rejoicing people.

II. In the next place, we have to describe the manner of preaching Christ. The Apostle speaks of two methods. First warning, then teaching. We will consider these in order. Now, within the borders of the Christian Church, at the time when the Apostle wrote, there were doubtless some who professed the faith of Christ, but who had no real and vital connection with His sacred person. A second generation had here and there sprung up, and there would probably be children who inherited the religion of their parents without being touched by its power. And then there would be others (perhaps, a considerable number of them) who, like Simon Magus, like Ananias and Sapphira, had been induced by some transient impulse, or by some calculation as to worldly advantages, to join themselves to a community becoming daily more numerous and more influential, but who were in no manner of sympathy with the higher, nobler life, which the members of the community were expected to lead. If such were the case, we can easily understand the necessity that had arisen for loud and emphatic warning, on the part of the Christian preacher.

Men are slumbering, as the rich man in the parable slumbered : wrapt up in a false belief of their own security · speaking peace to themselves, when there is no peace, and if they are to be saved from the horror of such a fate as that which the rich man encountered, they must be awakened to a sense of their danger, by the sharp, piercing, shattering tones of the Christian preacher.

But besides warning, the Apostle speaks of teaching ; and of teach-

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ing in all wisdom. Let us consider this point for a moment or two. A most important part of the office of the preacher is that of communicating instruction. Our Lord tells us that the instrument of sanctification is truth, God's truth. 'Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth.' Or, to express it somewhat differently, light and life, knowledge and grace, are, in the kingdom of God, inseparably connected with each other; and no one can hope to make advances in godliness, unless he is at the pains to make advances in the knowledge of divine things. For this reason, then, it is part of our ministry to do what we can in the way of spiritual instruction. A man is set apart, out of a Christian community, for this purpose amongst others, in order that, devoting his time to the study of God's word, and to such other matters as conduce to the right understanding of it, he may lead his people on into an ever-deepening and broadening acquaintance with the divine truth. He need not be the cleverest man in the congregation, nor even the most spiritual. But he has this one thing given him to do, whilst his hearers are occupied in the week with many other things. And he may calculate (as we may well believe) upon special divine assistance, for so important a work. He appears emphatically as a teacher. He has to bring forth out of the treasures of the divine word things new and old. Nor is there to be any concealment, any reservation in his teaching. His duty is to declare the whole counsel of God, so far as he understands it himself; and thus, not only to warn his flock, when he has occasion to do so, but also to 'teach them in all wisdom.'

III. We come now to the last point, the object of our preaching: 'To present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' This is something more, as you will observe, than to save every man. It is a great thing, to be the instrument, in God's hands, of bringing a fellow-creature to salvation; but when this is done, much more has to be done, the saved man has to be built up in the faith, so as to attain to what the Apostle calls 'perfection in Christ Jesus.' Scripture, as you will remember, recognises a growth in the believer. Beginning, as it were, as a child, he is to advance, through different stages, to the maturity of spiritual manhood. Born infants into the Church of Christ, we are not always to remain infants. There is to be continual progression. It is to this that the Apostle alludes, and he represents the object of his ministry to be, not merely to save men from this present evil world, but, when they are saved, to help them to attain the stature and the strength of the full-grown Christian. But what does the Apostle mean by the phrase 'presenting every man'? I think, indeed I have no doubt, that he alludes to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He and his flock will have to stand together before that awful throne. And he is determined to

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have to say for himself, 'Lord ! I did what in me lay to bring every soul committed to my charge to the knowledge of Thyself, and Thy truth. I strove to lead them up to the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. And here I come before Thee, O God, after an honest and earnest endeavour to present every one who was committed to my charge perfect in Christ Jesus.'

To be able to say this in the great day is the desire of every true minister of the gospel.

CANON GORDON CALTHROP.

The Divinity of Work.

My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. S. JOHN v. 17.

I. **W**ORK is not in itself the curse of man. Work was before the Fall: work shall be after the restoration. No curse which could have been devised for human sin would have been so formidable as that of a compulsory idleness. If God had sought only punishment, this might have been its nature; a perpetual and an inevitable inactivity. But God, 'even in wrath remembering mercy,' designed the curse of man to be remedial yet more than penal. And therefore He deprived him not of occupation. The punishment was not that labour should cease, but that labour should become (1) more severe, and (2) less productive. Hitherto employment had not passed into toil, nor work into pain; now 'in the sweat of thy face,' with effort more than moderate and exertion more than healthy, thou shalt oftentimes have to eat thy bread. Nor shall this excessive, this often painful toil be always remunerative. 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.' Labour shall too often be a disappointment: a man shall 'look for much, and bring in little.' Excessive toil shall also oftentimes be fruitless toil. In these two respects a curse has fallen upon labour. Work itself is salutary, is honourable, is blessed: but painful work, and fruitless work, is a memento of our degradation, a consequence of our fall.

Jesus answered them, 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work.' Toil may be human, but work is divine. Bear the one, and love the other.

II. 'And I work.' Yes, the work of the Son is even as the work of the Father. Truly His work on earth was as that of no other man. In the daytime there 'were many coming and going, and He had no leisure so much as to eat.' And as His days were given to toil, so His nights to prayer. For Him, as for us, yet far beyond us, earth was a place of toil.

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But what is heaven to Him? Does He rest there? Yes, 'in Thy presence is the fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' But that joy, that pleasure, is not found in inactivity. The life of Christ in heaven is a life of work. All that has been said of the Father has been said of Him. For is He not the doer of all the works of God? Has He not said, 'I and My Father are one'? Is it not He who 'made the worlds'? Is it not He who 'upholdeth all things by the word of His power'? Is it not He who hears and answers prayer, and ministers to His people of His Spirit? Is it not He, above all, who 'ever maketh intercession for us,' with a knowledge of want as minute as the power to relieve it is infinite?

Yes, it is not we only who have to work; our Saviour works, and our God works also. Weekday and Sunday, week by week, month by month, year by year, through years counted by the thousand and then not exhausted, has God Himself, the Father and the Son and the Spirit, set us the examples of the work to which He calls us. Never despise work as your reproach; never hate work as your curse. He who works not is contemptible; he who works not, high or low, rich or poor, has the mark of the curse, yea, of a curse which God never uttered, branded in fire upon his brow. Hand or head, there is that much of distinction and of difference, hand or head must work, in all of us, or we are mere 'cumberers of the ground, fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill.' And He who bids us work, works Himself. God our Creator, Christ our Redeemer, the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier, the very names show that each one works, yet more, far more, than we. Therefore let us look upward, and let us look onward! A day is coming when all of work that is bitter shall be done away; its over-toil, its scant reward. But work itself shall never end for the Christian. 'Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. O satisfy us with Thy mercy, and that soon: that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. And the glorious majesty of the Lord our God be upon us: prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us, O prosper thou our handy-work!'

DEAN VAUGHAN.

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VI ILLUSTRATIONS

Bearing Testimony. DISCOVERERS in the natural world frequently, for prudential reasons, keep silence as to their discoveries. S. MARK vii. 31-40. When Galileo first turned his glass on the planet Saturn he saw, as he thought, that it consisted of three spheres close together, the middle one being the largest. Being not quite sure of his fact, he was in a dilemma between his desire to wait longer for further observation, and his fear that some other observer might announce the discovery if he hesitated. To combine these, Galileo wrote a sentence, '*Altissimum planetam tergeminum observari*,' 'I have observed the highest planet to be triple.' He then jumbled the letters together and made the sentence into one long monstrous word, and published this, which contained his discovery, but under lock and key. He had reason to congratulate himself on his prudence, for within two years two of the supposed bodies disappeared, leaving only one; and for nearly fifty years Saturn continued to all astronomers the enigma which it was to Galileo, until in 1656 it was finally made clear that it was surrounded by a thin flat ring which, when seen fully, gave rise to the first appearance in Galileo's small telescope, and when seen edgeways disappeared from view altogether. With an instinct that makes the newly saved Christian long that others may share his joy, he, however, goes everywhere saying, 'We have found the Messias: this is the Christ.'

Testimony. THE Christian religion appears in some degree strange to reason: but in history we have undoubted facts, against S. MARK vii. 31-40. which, in reasoning *à priori*, we have more arguments than we have for them: but then testimony has great weight and casts the balance (S. John viii. 17).

He who tells nothing exceeding the bounds of probability has a right to demand that they should believe him who cannot contradict him (1 Cor. xiii. 7).

Effective Testimony. OF Felix Neff and Cesar Malan, M. de Goltz said: 'They possessed a power of faith, a spirit of prayer, and a courage of witness-bearing, which rendered their testimony extraordinarily blessed. Powerful personalities, they carried the testimony of Jesus Christ wherever they went. They did not allow a walk or an accidental meeting to pass, or make a journey, without finding or forming an opportunity to speak of their Saviour.'

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Scriptures Proper to the Day.

EPISTLE,	GALATIANS III. 16-22.
GOSPEL,	S. LUKE X. 23-37.
FIRST MORNING LESSON,	2 KINGS VI.
FIRST EVENING LESSON,	2 KINGS VI. 24 OR 2 KINGS VII.
SECOND LESSONS,	ORDINARY.

I. COMPLETE SERMON

Naaman's Expectations.

But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage. 2 KINGS V. 11, 12.



NAAMAN the Syrian, the proud noble, the brave soldier, the afflicted leper, is in these several capacities a representative man. His peers, his comrades, his fellow-sufferers, may well have been proud of claiming his friendship. But it is not these particulars which should engage our attention most earnestly. Naaman, as he waits, disappointed and indignant, before the door of Elisha's house in Samaria, represents human nature in presence of some higher truth than it has yet mastered—in presence of revelation; and from this point of view he may be studied with no little advantage.

Let us, first of all, glance at his history. Naaman, I have already

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said, was a brave and skilful soldier. The Bible tells us that by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria; and some recently discovered inscriptions make it at least probable that he had distinguished himself in a campaign by which the Syrians of Damascus were freed from the oppressive power of the Assyrian kings. The successful soldier naturally stood high in the favour of his sovereign, and in the opinion of his countrymen; but his life was embittered by the humiliating and painful disease, which in those ages was so prevalent throughout the East, and in which the Israelites had learnt to trace a material shadow or symbol of moral evil. Naaman's leprosy cannot have been of the severest type, or it would have interfered with his duties in the palace and in the camp—duties which, as it would seem, were never interrupted. Had he been an Israelite, his illness would have shut him out altogether from human society; but a pagan Syrian could still hold his position as a public man, although he must have felt keenly the distress and loathsomeness of his malady. It is plain, too, that his master, the king of Syria, felt and expressed strong sympathy with his distinguished officer, and that he was looking out for a remedy if one only could be had.

How then did Naaman, commanding the Syrian forces in Damascus, come to find himself waiting in the city of Samaria outside the door of a prophet of the Lord? The explanation is instructive because it shows the sort of channels along which, in all ages of the world's history, religious truth has filtered itself through the great fabric of human society, and it anticipates almost exactly what happened again and again in the earliest days of the Church of Christ. The Syrians, without being exactly at war with Israel, were on very bad terms with it ever since the failure of Ahab's expedition; and, from time to time, raids were made into the two territories from either side, and such booty as could be laid hands on was carried off. And, in one of these raids, the Syrians had carried away from her home a young Israelitish girl, who was now a slave in Naaman's palace, and in attendance upon his wife. Like Daniel, like Esther, like that late psalmist who has told us how by the waters of Babylon he sat down and wept, this maiden cherished a loving and tender memory of the religious blessings of her distant home. Often, no doubt, like another captive or exile, she would have exclaimed, 'Why art thou so vexed, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Oh, put thy trust in God, for I will yet give him thanks who is the help of my countenance, and my God.' In all ages there are persons who, without being slaves, live perforce in situations of dependence which often seem to cut them off from religious privileges, or from opportunities of religious usefulness. This is often the case with governesses, and, in another sense, with maid-servants among ourselves.

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Many such a one thinks it very hard to have to consult, at all times, the whims of a thoughtless mistress, and to pass what she deems an obscure and fruitless life. Depend upon it, where there is integrity of principle and simplicity of purpose, the time comes sooner or later for doing the act, or for saying the word, which gives dignity, greatness, sanctity, to any life, which redeems it altogether from being barren or commonplace. So it was with the little slave-girl in the palace of Naaman at Damascus. She saw day by day her master's sufferings uncured, and, so far as Syrian skill went, incurable. She had heard in her young days, in her beloved home, of the prophet who had succeeded Elijah, and who lived in great consideration and wielded immense authority in Samaria. She ventured to whisper to her mistress, in one of those moments of intimacy to which even slaves were not unfrequently admitted, that she wished her lord could only see the great prophet who dwelt in Samaria, and who, she felt sure, would cure the leprosy. Her words were repeated to Naaman, and Naaman in turn repeated them to the sovereign; and the king of Syria at once resolved to make the most of the suggestion. Naaman in person was ordered to leave at once for Samaria. He took with him money and presents, amounting to more than twelve thousand pounds of our money, and he was also the bearer of a letter which requested that the leper who bore it might be cured. The King of Israel himself was neither a physician nor a prophet, and he saw, or chose to see, in the despatch of the Syrian monarch, only one of those impossible demands with which ambitious sovereigns are wont to preface a declaration of war.

But Naaman's arrival, and all that had followed it, were reported to Elisha. With the freedom and authority of his great mission, he rebuked Jehoram for his unbelief and his alarm. Why could not Naaman be sent on to him that he might learn that there was a prophet in Israel? And so Naaman obeyed. The great Syrian left the palace of the monarch, and he drew up with his long line of horsemen, and in his splendid war chariot, before the humble dwelling of the prophet. He waited, expecting that the prophet who had invited him would at once appear. He waited, but, although the prophet was within, a servant only presented himself, and that not to invite him to enter Elisha's dwelling, but to bid him journey more than thirty miles across the country, and then bathe himself seven times in the stream of the Jordan. If he would do that, he would recover. It was this message which led to the outbreak of temper and language described in the text. 'Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah, his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and

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Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage.'

Here, I say, Naaman represents human nature, anxious to be blest by God's revelation of Himself, yet unwilling to take the blessing except on its own terms; for Naaman saw in Elisha, not merely, or chiefly, a master of the healing art, but the exponent or prophet of a religion which was, he dimly felt, higher and diviner than any he had encountered before. Like the sculptor of what is called the Moabite Stone, heathen though he was, Naaman was acquainted with the sacred name of Israel's God, and, indeed, he expected that Elisha would cure him by invoking that name. And thus, you observe, his bearing has a distinctly religious interest, and his treatment of Elisha's message has been repeated, and is repeated continually, under other circumstances, by thousands upon thousands of human beings. And our business is not to judge a man who, with scanty advantages, failed on a critical occasion in temper and in judgment, failed when dealing with a very serious subject. But his conduct, like all else in Holy Scripture, was certainly written for our learning, and we shall do well to see how far he may possibly have anticipated some of either our temptations or our actual failings in the great work of dealing with religious truth.

I. In Naaman's language, then, we see, first of all a sense of humiliation and wrong. Naaman feels himself slighted. He had been accustomed at the brilliant court of Damascus to receive a great deal of deference and consideration, more, probably, than any one else, except the monarch himself. He had made a long journey into what he probably considered a vassal kingdom; and here one of its religious ministers treats him as if he were in a position of clearly marked inferiority. 'Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me.' And Elisha's conduct cannot reasonably be ascribed to the legal prohibition of intercourse with lepers, or to any wish to magnify the miracle in the eyes of Naaman, still less to any fear of infection. Elisha divined Naaman's state of mind. He knew what was the first lesson that Naaman needed to learn. Elisha acted as the minister of Him who resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. It is so in our own day. Here, for instance, is a man who feels instinctively that Christianity can give him that which, in a lasting form, is attainable nowhere else, purity in his heart, peace in his soul. The man has tried Syria in all its forms, society, philosophy, pleasure, every kind of occupation; but there the sore remains. He has heard that Israel's true prophet still cures the leper, and he, too, comes for the remedy. But then he comes to Jesus Christ our Lord in an easy confident spirit, just as though he were doing the gospel a good turn

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by conferring upon it the distinction of his splendid patronage. He comes for a blessing, no doubt, but then he believes himself to be giving something like an equivalent. He comes, in short, in his inmost heart to treat with our Lord as if he were a sort of equal, not to bend utterly before the Holiest as a repentant sinner. And, therefore, the first duty which religion has to discharge towards him, is to convince him of the true state of the case. He has to be undeceived as to his own condition : he has to learn that he, as all else have, has sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and that, if justified at all, they are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

Certainly Christianity does not take a flattering view of fallen human nature. The first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans stand at the portal of the very fullest statement which we have in the whole of the New Testament of our Lord's redemptive work ; and when men are going about to establish their own natural righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness of God, when they are forgetting or slurring over the moral evil which has established a barrier between themselves and the All-Holy, when they would deal with Christianity just as if it were only a philosophy, truer, no doubt, and more comprehensive, and more adequate to deal with the facts, as they say, than other philosophies, but not entitled to set up a tribunal of judgment within the conscience, or to investigate and probe the secrets of the heart, then the message which is sent out to them runs thus, ' Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and knowest not that thou art miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and to anoint thy eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.'

II. And we see, secondly, in Naaman's language, the demand which human nature often makes for the sensational element in religion. Naaman expected an interview with the prophet that should be full of dramatic and striking incident. He knew perfectly well how the priests and magicians of his native Syria would have acted had they possessed a tithe of Elisha's power. They would have set it off by all the arts that could possibly impress the imagination. ' I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah, his God, and move his hand ' (so it is, quite literally) ' up and down over the place, and recover the leper.' And, instead of this, how tame and prosaic and businesslike is the proceeding! Naaman, the great prince and soldier, is put off with a curt message. He is told, just as any peasant might be told, to bathe seven times

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in the stream of the Jordan—a proceeding which was open to all the world besides. If the prophet had bidden him attempt some great thing, something corresponding to what he believed to be the general proportions of his station and his character, something verging upon the limits of the superhuman and the impossible, would he not have done, or tried to do it? Of course he would. But to drive some thirty miles across the hills in order to bathe in the national river of Israel at the end of the drive—the proposal was too commonplace: it was simply intolerable.

And here, I say, Naaman is human nature in all countries and all times. The striking, the impressive, the sensational, as a test of truth, are as much in request here and now as they were in Elisha's day in Samaria. A man is feeling his way, I again suppose, towards practical Christianity. He has lived on excitement all his life, and he expects still to find that which will gratify it to the full, although in another shape, at the door of the Church of Christ. It is a sort of necessity of his nature; and if he is not greeted by something that is exceptional and brilliant, he is quite prepared to go away in a rage, and then he is almost necessarily disappointed. 'I thought,' he says to himself, 'I thought that he whom I am seeking to cure me of my leprosy would surely come out to me, presenting himself in some splendid literature, in some world-wide, spotless, undivided Church, proclaiming truth by voices of matchless eloquence, inviting to worship by ceremonies of graceful and imposing magnificence. And yet, what is the case? The world which I have left does better, and after my experience of its charms I find the Church tame and insipid. Compare its hesitating, its stilted utterances,' he continues, 'with the freedom, with the resource, with the bold and fearless impetuosity, of worldly genius lavishing itself over the fields of poetry and philosophy, taking the human mind captive by its many-sided attractiveness. Compare its feeble, its unconnected and often disorganised or self-neutralising action, with the decision and the power which characterise the work of great worldly potentates and representative statesmen. Nay, how little do its most characteristic rites respond to the just expectations of my soul!' It is a hard thing when a man is waiting to be touched by the fire of prophetic utterance, that he should be sent in an official way (no doubt Naaman thought so), to bathe seven times in the stream of the Jordan. It is hard when a man is expecting some new and brilliant theory that shall take account, in its majestic compass, of all the facts that disturb, or that are supposed to disturb, all the possible relations of religion and philosophy, to be told simply, in the old way, that the blood of the atonement alone cleanses, and that the water in the font is still efficacious. So men speak. It is the voice of Naaman: it is the voice of human nature, which expects that

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when it is in contact with revealed religion, it must necessarily find the sensational.

No doubt at times, true religion does, to a certain extent, in condescension to our weakness, meet this deep craving of our nature. They who witnessed the Transfiguration, or the Ascension, or the tongues of fire as they descended on the day of Pentecost, they who heard S. Paul speak on the strand at Miletus, or who listened to the speakers in the mystic languages at Corinth, or who in the first fervour of their conversion would have plucked out their eyes and given them to the Apostle who had brought them to the feet of Christ, they, assuredly, must have felt in varying degrees something of its power. And it is undeniable that, again and again, in the later ages of Christendom, vast enthusiasms have swept over the Christian populations, that Elisha has, as it were, come out to the door of his house, and has passed his hand again and again rapidly over the sores of society, and has recovered the leper. But, on the whole, the strength of revealed religion is seen in its power of dispensing with efforts of this kind, for its force resides, not in the earthquake which occasionally shakes, not in the fire which at times consumes the heart of the Church, but in the still small voice which speaks to conscience. The power of producing a great sensation is no test of truth or of goodness. The power of controlling passion and of quickening conscience is a test. But then this is achieved in quietness and confidence, achieved often most successfully in the discharge of routine duties, in the formation and the strengthening of quiet and deep convictions, in that inner life of affection for our Lord which risks its excellence by rude exposure, by eager demonstrativeness. An early Communion, where ten or twelve assemble in the twilight to receive the Sacrament of the Divine Redemption, is likely, often, to be much more useful than attendance at an evening sermon in a crowded church.

III. And, once more, Naaman represents prejudiced attachment to early associations, coupled, as it often is, with a jealous impatience of anything like exclusive claims put forward on behalf of the truths or ordinances of a religion which we are for the first time attentively considering. Naaman will forget the prophet's disappointing reserve. His mind rests for a moment on the prophet's command. What is he to do? He is to bathe, it appears, in some distant stream, and then the leprosy will disappear. Will not the rivers of his native Syria suffice, the clear, cool stream of the Abana or Barada, rushing down from the Antilibanus, and forming the oasis on which his native Damascus is built, or, farther to the south, the Pharpar, flowing from the plain into the desert lake? If the cure is to depend on any such conditions at all, why will not these historic waters

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achieve it? Why must he be asked to bathe in the turbid and muddy brook which he had passed on the road to Samaria, and which was bound up with the history of an alien race? 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?' Few things can be more precious than early associations when we have been nurtured, through God's mercy, in a Christian home, and when memory treasures up actions and persons on whom Christ our Lord has shed the light of His countenance. But it is otherwise when this unspeakable blessing has been denied us, when the heart has given of its freshest and its best to that which is erroneous or is wrong. Then, if we ever reach the door of Elisha's house, there is an inevitable struggle, and men ask why grace, of which, as yet, they know so little is, after all, so efficacious and so necessary; and they ask why nature, of which they may or may not really know more, cannot do the work of cleansing them from their defilement. 'Look at nature,' they say, 'look at its beauty, its freedom, its resource. Can it be the impotent, the fruitless thing that you say? Has it not its points of superiority to the hard, stiff, formal teaching of your theologians? Are not the green fields better than the close air and the dingy aspect of your churches? Is not a good library, or a brilliant conversation, or a scientific lecture, more to the purpose than your dull and uninteresting sermons? Why are we to believe that your sacraments are the especial channels of any regenerative efficacy, that a little water and a few words can make, as your catechism says, 'a member of Christ, a child of God, and an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven'? High intellectual gifts, a great moral ascendancy, these things, we believe it, these things may compass the regeneration of the world. For the rest, it has been well said that a good national literature is much more to the purpose than all or any of the gifts of Christ.'

Nature, no doubt, can do much. We may admit it, because all that is great, beautiful, productive, in nature, comes most assuredly, like the gifts of grace, from the good God, the fountain of all goodness. But nature can no more rise above its level than water can. Nature can civilise, undoubtedly: that is one thing. It cannot regenerate: that is quite another. He who made us can alone remake us; and He is perfectly free to choose the channel of this His last, His choicest gift. He might have made the Syrian waters the means of His healing power; He might have denied for ever any efficacy to the waters of the Jordan. There was no physical quality inherent in the Jordan water that wrought the cure. The cure was wrought by the Divine Will connecting its efficacy with this one particular instrument. Of themselves neither Syrian nor Jewish streams had, let me repeat, any healing

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properties at all. By a particular choice, God made the Jewish river the means whereby His healing virtue was to be dispensed to Naaman. The question is not whether man's natural life in thought and action has not a force and a splendour that is all its own. Of course it has. The question is whether anything in it can render unnecessary or superfluous that stupendous act of power and of love which was achieved on Mount Calvary. Of itself, a little water applied to a child's forehead, while a few words are repeated at the moment, could not possibly convey any spiritual gift. To suppose this would be simply to believe in a material charm. But if, choosing this out of a thousand possible acts or symbols, He to whom all power is given in earth and heaven, has, indeed, attached to it a specific spiritual efficacy, then, I say, the case is utterly different. Nature may be, in itself, more graceful, more fertile, more persuasive. She is comparatively powerless to touch, to remould, the soul of man, because she lacks that which gives power to that which in themselves are weak and beggarly elements: she lacks the chartered presence of the world's Redeemer, the presence of Christ.

IV. But to go, lastly, to the root of the matter. Naaman's fundamental mistake consisted in his attempt to decide at all how the prophet should work the miracle of his cure. He plainly, in reason, had no means of doing this. He only knew, or had reason to suppose, that the religion of Israel was higher and diviner than his own. He came to it for that which his own could not give him, and he, suppliant and leper as he was, was in no position to determine what would or would not be appropriate action or advice on the part of its ministers. If it did its work, if he obtained the cure he needed, that would be enough. To decide upon its method of procedure was beyond his power. Yet how often is this fundamental mistake repeated! Men who know themselves to be lepers, who have lived all their lives far on the wrong side of the frontier of the Christian Church, and who, at last, through God's mercy have come to it for that which neither civilisation nor culture can possibly give them, men who have come, it may be, thus far, at very considerable sacrifices, with their ten talents of silver and their six thousand pieces of gold and their ten changes of raiment, men who have discovered that a Jehoram, a mere worldly compromise with religion, cannot help them, and have pushed their way on resolutely, persistently, to the very door of Elisha, yet, strangely, they conceive themselves able to determine what their great benefactor ought to do in order to achieve their cure. Christian evidences, they say, ought to be mathematical: moral evidence will not do. Christian doctrine must include these elements. it must exclude those. Christian worship must either be the exaggeration of slovenliness, or the exaggeration of ceremony. Christian

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philanthropy must make a compact with our political economy. Christian philosophy must come to an understanding with this or that writer who is at issue with its first postulates. Christian morals must have an eye to detail, and yet must avoid becoming casuistry. Christianity as a whole must respond to our expectations without violently exceeding them. In short, Christ must come out to meet the man ; He must stand ; He must move His hand, just as the man desires, over the place, and must recover the leper.

Do I say that Naaman has no duties except those simple submission? Do I say that there are no conditions with which a faith claiming to come from God must comply in order to claim the allegiance of the human soul? Far from it. Apart from the evidence which lead a man up to faith, there are two tests of a true revelation which can never be dispensed with. It must not contradict the highest, purest, clearest voice of natural conscience : it must not contradict itself. Our sense of primarily moral truth is just as much God's voice as His revelation of truth without us. He cannot unsay without what He has already told us within. Our conscience, of course, may be misinformed. We must look to that : it is a grave matter. But if, for instance, it were true that the doctrine of the atonement contradicted the true idea of justice, not of justice between one creature and another creature, but of a very different thing, justice as between the creature and the Creator, then that would be a reason for rejecting the doctrine. And if we are told that a series of teachers who, unless history is worthless, contradict each other on important points, are all equally infallible, that certainly is a reason for distrusting the system which makes the assertion. But beyond this, in the purely spiritual and supernatural sphere, we are not at all able to say beforehand what a religion coming from God ought to do, ought to teach, ought to be like. The finite cannot measure the Infinite or His work. To attempt to do this is to be exposed sooner or later to the shock of certain disappointment. A German poet satirises the writers of his day who say practically, 'What I could have done had I only been the Christ!' And an Apostle, when he closes his account of the dispensation of mercy, exclaims, 'Oh, the depth of the riches both of the mercy and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!'

Naaman, we know, thought better of it. After his recovery he showed that he had a grateful and a simple heart by returning to Samaria, by making his acknowledgments to Elisha, by making his profession of faith in Elisha's God. And the general lesson of his history is plain. We are lepers ; we need the healing virtue that goes forth from our Lord and Saviour, however, whenever, through

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whomsoever, He may bestow it. We know that He, the true prophet of all the ages, heals souls in the midst of Israel. We know that His Blood cleanses, that His Spirit sanctifies, that there are appointed channels of His grace and His power. If we are satisfied that the general evidence for this revelation of love and mercy is at all sufficient to live by, to rest upon in life and in death, do not let us dream of the folly of improving upon His work in detail, of asking for, or of creating, new organs of infallibility, or of depreciating old and assured means of sharing His redemptive grace. It is unpractical as well as irreverent to discuss what has been settled by the Infinite Wisdom, and therefore settled irrevocably. The true scope of our activity is to make the most, the very most, day by day, of His bounty and His love that by His healing and strengthening grace we, too, may be cured of our leprosy, may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal.

H. P. LIDDON.

II. OUTLINE ON THE EPISTLE

‘The Blessing of Abraham.’

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. GAL. iii. 16.



WE proceed from week to week along the Sundays after Trinity, every one seems to open to us some new view of the loving-kindness of God, urging the same upon us as constraining motives to serve Him with something of the same love to Him and to each other. And so it is to-day. S. Paul, in the epistle, is explaining to the Galatians that ‘the blessing of Abraham’ comes not on the Jews as such, but on all of us, as we are in Christ.

‘To Abraham,’ he says, ‘and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to his seeds, as of many’; the word of promise speaks not of the many families of the Jews, born on the stock of Abraham, but speaks ‘as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ’; to Christ the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, and in whose body, being one, are contained all the faithful.

But, again, the Jews supposed that through the fulfilment of the Law, which came in so long after, they should inherit this blessing of Abraham; this then the Apostle proceeds to answer. ‘And this

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I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ,' in giving the promise to Abraham, 'the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.' For the inheritance of the kingdom is given to us at our baptism, as being in Christ; it is a free gift, according to the promise made to Abraham. 'For if the inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.'

'Wherefore then serveth the Law?' the Jew will ask. 'It was added,' says S. Paul, 'because of transgression'; it was as a bridle placed upon the Jews, to restrain their wickedness, and that too only for a time; 'till the seed shall come,' he says, 'to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hands of a Mediator.' The Law itself was dispensed by the ministering spirits of Christ, who Himself was before the Law, and gave the Law as the great Mediator between God and man. For He spake there by means of angels and prophets, not as in the gospel by Himself. 'Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.' A free gift without conditions, requires no mediator; but the Law was through a mediator between God and man. A mediator implies two persons. God Himself is but one; the other party must be man therefore, and his part was to be performed, which was obedience. For a mediation cannot be like a promise, dependent on one party only.

'Is the Law then against the promises of God?' Does it by bringing in the curse of disobedience stop the promised blessing, and cut off the Jew who lived under the Law? God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law. For the Law never could under any circumstances have given life; and, therefore, its non-fulfilment cannot destroy the promise of life. 'But the Scripture hath concluded,' hath shut up together, all, not all men, but more, all things, the whole creation, 'under sin, that the promise by the faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.' The Law was to convince them of sin, and bring them to Christ; thus John the Baptist preached repentance; if they had believed Moses they would have believed in Christ. The Law was but the means, not the end; but the Jews were now making it the end; whereas the end of the Law is Christ, in whom is the promise, and the blessing, and the covenant, and righteousness, and life; not for a time only, but for ever. It was to this the prophets of old looked, to this the saints of the elder covenant aspired, to behold Christ, the end of the Law, in whom dwells the fulness of all good, the love of God flowing down from heaven and embracing all men; as the fragrant oil that came down on the head of Aaron and went to the skirts of his clothing.

ISAAC WILLIAMS.

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III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

The Eternal Life of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he, answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. S. LUKE x. 25-28.



HERE is no one of the Apostles who dwells so much upon this commandment as S. John. He dwells upon it in that character. He does not speak of love to God or our neighbour as raising us above commandments. It is His commandment—the commandment—that we should love. In this commandment, he says, there is life; it carries with it the power of fulfilling it, because it proceeds from the Almighty Father—because it comes to us through Him who has fulfilled it.

I. A lawyer stood up and tempted Christ, saying, ‘Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ Eternal life! Yes, that must be the highest of all gifts. How could it be earned? What sacrifices could be costly enough to win it? Had not Jesus some special rules for obtaining it? No, apparently none. He refers the lawyer to his own books. What is written there? The student and interpreter of the Scriptures considers. Some very remarkable words occur to his mind in the Book of Deuteronomy, words about loving the Lord God with all the heart and soul and strength, words about loving one’s neighbour as one’s-self. Perhaps those were the words in the Law which Jesus meant. Perhaps the lawyer had heard that He often referred to those words. Yes, the quotation was an apposite one. He had found out the way to eternal life. ‘This do, and thou shalt live.’ Had he done this, then? The question was a painful one to the lawyer’s conscience. There was a way out of it. The law did not define the neighbour—who is he?

II. You know what story was the answer to this question. We call it the story of the Good Samaritan. We could not, perhaps, give it a better name. But why was the Samaritan good? Did his country give him some advantage over the Levite and the priest? Did his faith? Did something specially blessed in his own individual

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nature? If his goodness could be referred to any one of these causes, he was no example to the Jew—the lawyer could not be fairly bidden to ‘go and do likewise.’ No! But that commandment which the lawyer found in the Book of Deuteronomy—that law of loving the neighbour as himself—had been written in the heart of the Samaritan. He confessed that he was bound by it. Therefore he took account of the man who was by the wayside, though he had come from Jerusalem to Jericho, though he was of an alien and hostile race, though those of his own race did not esteem him their neighbour. Therefore he sate him upon his own beast; therefore he poured oil and wine into his wounds; therefore he took care of him. He made no pretence to exalted virtue; he did not ask for any reward. He did the things which a voice within him bade him do. He yielded to a law, but it was a law of love, a law of liberty, and in that law there was life.

III. The lesson is keen and pointed; it strikes its roots deeply; they spread themselves far. The Samaritan heretic obeys the divine law in its largest sense; the strict Jew breaks it in its most limited and narrow sense. But it is a law to one as much as the other. The notion of love or charity as a self-indulgence, as the mere following of a kindly impulse, is as foreign to the New Testament as to the Old. God commands, man only obeys; this is equally the doctrine of both. But from what God does the command come? How is it to be obeyed? Christ shows forth in Himself what the God is from whom the command comes—how it is to be obeyed. The Son does what the Father wills to be done. All the acts of the Son are acts of willing self-sacrifice—acts of service to mankind. These are the acts by which He pays homage to His Father, in which He reveals His Father. To be moulded into conformity with His will, to have the Spirit of the Father and the Son who alone can mould us—this is the blessing of all blessings. This is that which prophets and kings longed for. To have this gift is the privilege of all, for Christ has died and risen and ascended; to accept it and live under the law of love—this is what we shall find to be the true, the eternal life, when we have been stripped of all our own pretensions, when we are content to receive all things from the Son of Man. This life is not a reward for keeping the commandment. In keeping the commandment you will possess it, you will enjoy it. If we did love God with all our hearts and soul and strength and mind, if we did love our neighbour as ourselves, we should have the divine, perfect life, the life of the eternal God. We should want nothing more, we could have nothing more. Let us think of this as we kneel at God’s altar. The infinite eternal charity is all gathered up in the sacrifice which Christ made for the world. The

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eternal life is shown forth in His death. We are permitted, we are invited, to partake of that Sacrifice, to eat the Flesh and Blood. We are permitted then, we are invited, to lay hold of eternal life. We do lay hold of it if we obey those commandments which the Samaritan, who had so little of our light, obeyed when he treated his enemy, the Jew, as his brother. For then we confess that a God of charity rules us and rules the universe; then we ask Him to forgive us all our breaches of charity, and to fill us with His charity, since we have none of our own.

F. D. MAURICE.

The Good Samaritan.

Who is my neighbour? S. LUKE x. 29.

THE parable which follows this, that of the Good Samaritan, is the answer to this question. It tells us that the enemy of our country may be our neighbour, so may the sectary who differs from us in religion; such a man may be our neighbour, as when we need, he may show us charity, whilst the ministers of our religion, who are teachers of the love of God and of our neighbour, may pass us by without stirring hand or foot to help us.

I. 'By chance there came down a certain priest that way.' If he was going to Jerusalem, he would most probably be going up to take part in the service of God. If he was coming from Jerusalem, he had most probably taken part in that service. Whose service? The service of Him whose tender mercy is over all His works. The service of Him who said respecting strangers, 'He loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger.' And yet he passed by on the other side.

II. Almost all commentators give the same spiritual or typical meaning. The wounded man is human nature. The robbers are the powers of evil. The Priest and the Levite are the law and the prophets, utterly powerless, as we have seen in the Epistle. The Lord Himself is the Good Samaritan, who took our nature upon Him to heal it. He brought us to a place of comparative safety, even His Church. He put us under His ministry, He gave us His Word and His Sacraments. And if there was anything else needful, He would have given it. So that He Himself had set the example of the most fervent charity before He uttered this parable. 'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God' (1 S. John iv. 7).

H. F. SADLER.

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The Good Samaritan.

Who is my neighbour? S. LUKE x. 29.

I. **L**IKE all our Saviour's parables, this was probably suggested, if not by any outward incident, at least by the circumstances of the time and country, possibly, of the very place, in which it was delivered. We are not told by the Evangelist where he was when the lawyer questioned Him; but immediately afterwards we are told that He entered into the village of Martha and Mary. That village (as we well know) was Bethany. Bethany was the mountain hamlet which stood at the head of that great descent from Jerusalem to Jericho which is the scene of the parable which He now delivered. If, as we may suppose, He was advancing up the road which He so often trod, leading from the deep valley of the Jordan to the high country of Judea, the country which lay before Him would easily suggest the whole circumstances of the story. It is a steep mountain pass, descending for nearly four thousand feet; but, unlike the mountain passes with which we are familiar, it is enlivened by no verdure, it is cheered by no spring of living water. Bethany is the last human habitation before you descend into that deep abyss of bare precipice and rugged mountain. Far below lies the desert plain of the Jordan, broken only by the track of vegetation which follows the course of the river; and from that desert plain, and behind those rugged rocks, came forth, and have come forth in all times, those savage robbers of the wild Arabian tribes who have made the road from the earliest times known as the Bloody Way. But, unlike many of the waste places of the earth, it was a road which, in spite of its dangers and desolation, at the time of which our Lord spoke, was a necessary thoroughfare between two great and flourishing cities. Jerusalem at the head of the pass, and Jericho at its foot, were both important seats of government, of religion, and of commerce. The one as the capital of Judea, the other, as the favourite residence of the Herodian family, and also as one of the chief stations of the Priests and Levites, and as producing in the rich gardens which grew up in the tropical heat of its beautiful oasis some of the chief articles of luxury to the surrounding countries. It was along this road then that a certain man 'went down from Jerusalem to Jericho,' and it was in the midst of this wilderness that the fate which has there so often befallen the solitary traveller overtook him on his journey. He 'fell among thieves' (as we should say 'among robbers'), the Arabian robbers of whom I

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have before spoken, whose hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them; who still render it necessary for every pilgrim who passes that way to go with an armed escort, on his road to the Jordan. They overpowered him in a moment; they stripped off his clothes, as is still their wont; they beat him cruelly, and they vanished again amid the desert rocks, leaving him half dead in the glare of the Syrian sun, reflected from the white cliffs of the mountain pass on this side and on that.

II. How impossible it is to read the story without being reminded of the incidents which may occur to any one of us in our passage through the world, whether on our actual travels or on that longer journey, that deep descent, that steep ascent, from Jerusalem to the Jordan, from the Jordan to Jerusalem, in which we are all engaged between our birth and our death! How many are the sufferers who have fallen amongst misfortunes along the wayside of life! 'By chance' we come that way; chance, accident, Providence, call it by what name we will, has thrown them in our way; we see them from a distance, like the Priest, or we come upon them suddenly like the Levite; our business, our pleasure, is interrupted by the sight, is troubled by the delay; what are our feelings, what our actions towards them? The Priest and the Levite may have had good reasons for hurrying on; they may have been hastening to services, which they could not postpone, to duties which would not allow them to endanger their lives. The parable blames them not. It leaves us to ask whether we should have done likewise, it leaves us to determine who are most to be admired. They who did as we should all naturally do, they who would not be put out of their way, they who thought it beneath the notice of religious men to do a homely deed of kindness, they who thought it imprudent to mix themselves up with a matter which was no concern of theirs; or he who had compassion on the wounded man, he who administered comfort and support, he who broke off his journey, who for the sake of a stranger did that which kinsmen declined to do. The Priest and the Levite are types of likenesses of men as they commonly are; thinking much of themselves, and little of others; with much prudence, much foresight, it may be, but with little sympathy, little power of self-denial. Let them go on their way. Judge them not harshly. Judge them not more harshly than we should venture to judge ourselves. But let us remember that there is a higher type of character, a better standard of the true Christian traveller than this. The good deed of the Good Samaritan has still a fragrant odour in all the world; may it be ours, if God throws like opportunities in our paths, to be enabled to share his blessing, and go and do likewise!

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But this general lesson of benevolence to the distressed, of attendance on the sick and afflicted, of seizing opportunities of good as eagerly as we are accustomed to seize opportunities of pleasure; this, though a great lesson of the parable, is not its only, or even its chief, lesson. The immediate question to which it was an answer was, not 'What is my duty to my neighbour?' but 'Who is my neighbour?' And the answer was given not the less precisely for its being given indirectly. The lawyer—that is, as we should call him the expounder and teacher of the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament—he thought doubtless, when he spoke of 'loving his neighbour as himself,' that it was enough if he thereby bound himself to love those with whom he agreed, those of his own country, of his own church, of his own persuasion. Nor would it have been a sufficient lesson for him, if the parable had been so turned, that the act of mercy should have been performed by a good Jew towards an afflicted stranger, even though that stranger were a Samaritan. This is not enough to open the narrow heart or to enlighten the blinded mind; even the most uncharitable are well content to admire and approve even acts of comprehensiveness and toleration if they are performed by those with whom we ourselves agree. But what we shrink from acknowledging, and what this parable forced the lawyer, and through him forces us, to acknowledge, is this, that acts of goodness may be done by those from whom we differ; that even those from whom we differ, even those who like the Samaritan are outcasts and aliens from the outward Church of God, and 'worship they know not what,' may yet be endowed with a higher grace and gifted with nobler gifts than those who like the Priest and Levite 'stand day and night in the sanctuary,' and 'rest in the law and make a boast of God, and know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent, and have the form of knowledge and of truth.' Who as he reads this parable will not feel that he had rather cast his lot with the Good Samaritan than with the Priest and Levite? Who will not feel in like manner, as he casts his eye backward over the history of the Church, or as he studies the signs of our own times, that he had far better meet the judgment of his Redeemer, loaded with the errors of many a heretic, than with the sins of many a champion of the true faith?

III. 'Who is my neighbour?' The question has received its answer. It is, we have observed, a threefold answer. 'Who is thy neighbour?' First, it is the sufferer, wherever, whoever, whatsoever he be. Wherever thou hearest the cry of distress; wherever thou seest any one struck down by the injustice, the oppression, the licentiousness, the selfishness of men; wherever thou seest any one brought across thy path by the chances and changes of life, that is,

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by the Providence of God, whom it is in thy power to help—he, stranger or enemy though he be,—he is thy neighbour.

A. P. STANLEY.

Who is my Neighbour ?

Who is my neighbour? S. LUKE x. 29.

I. **T**HIS memorable question strikes the key-note of the most picturesque and most practical of the parables, a parable which has probably done more than anything that could be named to inspire active and self-denying charity; and, as we listen to it again to-day, we may well ask to what it owes its surpassing power, its endearing hold over the hearts of men. Not to that element of adventure which impresses the young imagination, and makes the parable of the Good Samaritan the favourite parable of childhood; not to anything in the mere framework and colouring of the story, perfect as these are, but truly to the fact that Christ here appeals to a deep and sacred instinct of the human soul, that He touches that common heart of humanity which thrills to those realities of sorrow or of joy felt to be the common inheritance of all its interest endures in virtue of that holy bond which grows out of sympathies immortal as our own spirits. It is to this instinct that Christ has made His appeal. His 'new commandment,' put into imperishable example by His own life and death, was intended to stir and quicken it, to convert it into the guiding principle of life. The instinct was already there. It was, indeed, as S. John says, 'no new commandment' when Christ set forth love as the master motive, but the old commandment which men had from the beginning written on their heart by the very finger of God. Christ's adoption and expansion of it has been well compared to the modern application of electricity of any kind to beneficent ends and to the secrets of our daily life. Just as certain electrical phenomena had been familiar for ages to the rude Indian of the far west and applied by him to his childish needs, while yet the grand capacities of some of these phenomena were unsuspected and unrevealed, so the profound utilisation of the principle and of its extension by Christ to all persons and all possible circumstances of life, is truly and properly a new commandment, a discovery, a gospel, a revelation. Now if we would realise the boldness and the originality of our Lord's exposition of the word 'neighbour,' we must place ourselves by an effort of imagination under the influence of that spirit which He found at work in this world. It was nothing short

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of a miraculous change when from the midst of the most bigoted and insular of nations there went forth the announcement of universal brotherhood. When Christ appeared among men selfishness was probably at its height. All the civilised world over, the natural kindness and fellow-feeling of men had been long repressed by low and cynical maxims. The Gentile sneered at the Jew for his intolerance and for the exclusiveness of his charity.

II. The Roman satirist said that no Jew would tell a traveller the way unless he was of his own persuasion. Yet what the Gentile understood by human brotherhood we may learn from the language of the best and wisest among them, who thanked heaven that he was born a man and not a brute, a Greek, that is, and not a barbarian; and Plato congratulated the Athenians on having shown in their foreign policy beyond all other Greeks, a power and hearty hatred of the foreign nature. The Jew to whom the command, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' had come direct from heaven, had gradually narrowed down the word 'neighbour,' till it meant his fellow-countrymen, and at last his personal friend, so that a rabbinical gloss had become current, and was quoted by Christ, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.' That larger comprehensiveness of spirit of which we had an example in Elisha's cure of the Syrian general was rare indeed. The true moral of that cure had apparently been lost, for Christ, you remember, had to draw it out anew. He showed that it was in reality a protest against excessive privilege, an anticipation of the great gospel theory of neighbourhood, a sign that the quality of the divine mercy was 'not strained.' There were many lepers in Israel at the time of Elisha the prophet, He said, but these had no monopoly of the prophet's power. Nay, says our Lord, none of them was healed save Naaman the Syrian.

III. The parable of the Good Samaritan grew, like others, out of an apparently casual incident in the course of our Lord's daily ministry. A lawyer, we are told, stood up to tempt Him, to put Him to the test by means of the most crucial question that could be addressed to a religious teacher. There was, however, no malignant animus on the part of the inquirer; there was no reason to suppose that he was not sincere and well-disposed. He may not indeed have been deeply concerned about his religious spirit, or profoundly conscious of spiritual need; professional curiosity may have largely mingled with genuine desire for higher good when he put that question, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' The reply which he receives is profoundly suggestive; it amounts in fact to this: 'Your inquiry has been answered; it is answered in that very law of which you are the accredited teacher and expounder; how dost thou

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read it?' That the lawyer should at once summarise the law into the two great commandments gave proof of a spiritual insight rare in his class, and our Lord accepts his answer as perfectly correct and perfectly adequate. His knowledge of duty, He tells him, was all that could be desired; it only remained for him to put that knowledge into practice: 'Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.' And this advice it is that touches the lawyer's conscience, this injunction to live up to what he knows finds him out; he feels at once that his fulfilment of the law of love has lagged far behind his theory. Yet he would fain justify himself if possible. If he has been remiss in the display of love to his neighbour, it has been from mere ignorance or uncertainty; it has been owing to the difficulty of fixing the precise extension of that word neighbour. Whom did it include? Where was the line to be drawn? Who had a claim to his love? Who had none?

It has been wisely said that the question he now puts, 'Who is my neighbour?' like S. Peter's question, 'How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?' was not merely a question which might receive a wrong answer, but a question wrong in itself, involving, that is, a wrong condition of mind, out of which alone it could have proceeded. The man who asked, 'Whom shall I love?' betrayed a radical misconception of the command by which he professed to live; and, therefore, it was that our Lord so framed the parable which embodied His answer as to divert the lawyer's thoughts from the recipient to the giver. His own attitude, his own state of heart, was the chief thing. He had asked, 'Who is my neighbour?' to whom, that is, am I bound to show love? But the parable only incidentally answers that question. It is a direct answer to quite a different and a far more salutary question, Who is my neighbour—he who shows love or he who shows it not? The lawyer would fain have had our Lord define for him the precise marks by which he was to identify the proper object of his love; he expected to be told within what exact limits of kindred or of religious creed he was to look out for his neighbour; and our Lord portrays a man who takes no account whatever of these limits—a man who, in the nobility and freedom of his love, completely overlooks them; to make the lesson more striking, a man of a despised and alien race who, in the enthusiasm of his humanity, asks no questions, ministers lavishly with the heart and hand to the desperate need of one who is for him simply a brother man and no more.

IV. It would not be easy to exhaust the teaching, more or less obvious, which this parable contains; but its main unmistakable lesson, brought straight home by Christ to the heart of his interrogator, 'Go and do likewise,' which of us has truly thought that out? Which

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of us has pondered in all its aspects that Good Samaritan's act of mercy, his noble promptitude, his superiority to inveterate prejudice, his disregard of his own bodily peril (for that was involved), his sacrifice of his own time, and means, and personal comfort, the pains he was at to provide for all the contingencies, and to make the help he gave thoroughgoing and complete? 'Go and do thou likewise.' The act which our Lord describes implies a love and requires a spirit of which we can all recognise the duty, but of which few will dare to think themselves capable. But this parable has set the standard of Christian philanthropy, at which we all profess to aim. We accept Christ's definition of our duty to our neighbour; we admit no limitation to the range of Christian love; we profess to behold in every man, no matter how far separated from us in blood, or creed, or sympathy, one who has a claim upon us, one whom in virtue of the universal brotherhood and the universal redemption, we are bound to stand by and befriend in his need. That gospel to which we all bow as the law of our lives is the message of one who regarded the whole race of man as given into His own hand for safe-keeping; the legacy of one who sacrificed Himself that He might be true to that great self-imposed trust; the story of one who on the best authority 'went about doing good,' who so answered the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' in deed still more persuasively than in words, by the eloquence of a perfectly unselfish life and a perfectly unselfish death.

CANON DUCKWORTH.

Social Amelioration.

Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbour unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him Go and do thou likewise. S. LUKE x. 36-37.

I. **N**EARLY nineteen centuries have elapsed since the angels sang their carol at the birth of Christ. What have been the issues of that first Christmastide? Let no sorrow, no discouragement make us fail to see that the results have been immense in their beneficence. The French statesman cried in despair, 'Christ has come, but when cometh salvation?' An English poet sings, 'We have preached Christ for centuries, until at last men learn to scoff, so few seem any better off.' Let no such notes of distress blind us to what is still a splendid reality. The abolition of slavery among the Christian nations; the extinction of gladiatorial games, the cruelties of the amphitheatre; war rendered more merciful and more rare; womanhood honoured and elevated; childhood surrounded with an

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aureole of tenderness and embraced in the arms of mercy ; education everywhere extended ; marriage sanctified ; the bond of serfdom broken ; hospitals built ; the eternal and inalienable rights of man everywhere asserted ; pity upon prisoners ; compassion even to the animal world ; the gospel of Christ preached to the poor—these are some few of the triumphs of Christianity. They belong not only to its ideal, but also in a large measure to its achievements.

II. This is one side of the picture—a blessed and a hopeful side. There is another. Do not make the common mistake of saying when you hear it that it is a truth that the gospel has failed. Never and nowhere has the gospel failed ; never and nowhere has Christianity, when it has been a real Christianity, been other than a consummate blessing and the greatest of all blessings to mankind. You might just as well say that duty had failed because, though it is sublime as heaven, yet men have not given obedience to its laws. But although Christianity has not failed, and cannot fail, yet alike in heathen and Christian lands Christians have failed terribly, egregiously, again and again ; have failed to rise to the standard of their own profession, and to realise the efforts and self-denials which their Lord requires. Whole ages and generations, alas ! have failed to carry forward His banner, and multitudes in every age and generation have betrayed His cause ; and, different as are our degrees of guilt, in our measure we are all guilty. Darkly and terribly guilty are all they who live in wilful and constant violation of the law of God ; all, every one of them, who ‘set themselves to do evil, to work all uncleanness with greediness,’ who call evil good and good evil, who are gaining their livelihoods in ways which demoralise or degrade or defraud mankind, and who thus fundamentally deny the Lord that bought them, and count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were redeemed a common thing. Guilty also are all, and they are many, who, without active and flagrant immorality, are living only to the world and to the flesh ; they are egotistical, indifferent, caring only for their own comfort or interest ; shut up amid their own refinements and indulgences, heedless of the howling winds which are wrestling on the great deep without, and the multitudes who are being helplessly swallowed up in those wild waves. Less guilty, yet still needing to be aroused to nobler aims, are the multitudes who, though not useless, not immoral, yet too blind to the solemn responsibilities which God lays upon us all, raise no finger outside the narrow circle of their own domesticities to make the world happier or better. Least guilty, yet not wholly to be acquitted, are those who do love and pity their suffering fellow-men, but, folding their hands in their mute despair before the perplexities of life’s awful problem, need to be fired by fresh energies and brighter hopes. It is to the latter classes

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that I would mainly speak, yet not I, but the voice of God in the events of this our day; and the message of the voice to all of us alike is, 'Do not be apathetic; do not be selfish; do not despair.' 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto men? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.'

One of the many ways in which the world and the merely nominal Church tries to check every effort for good, to discourage every reform, and to choke in anguish the voice of every prophet is when the tale of misery or sin is brought under their notice, to say, 'That is sensational; that is exaggerated.' It is a very contemptible form of obstruction. I suppose that the most callous, and the most selfishly optimistic person here will hardly take upon him to deny that in England there is a vast area of want and vice, of crime and misery, the existence of which it is shameful to ignore, since the facts of it are daily before our eyes, and the proofs of it are daily thrust under our notice. Within a bow-shot even of this place are streets where drink and harlotry are rampant, where men, women, and children live in chronic misery, where every now and then some terrible crime is perpetrated, and if the ordinary comfortable citizen does not know all about the poor that we, the clergy, know, yet the daily journals and the commonest records of justice will tell them of the ravages, of betting and gambling, of drunkenness and impurity, of beggary and ruin, of starvation and despair, of the slum and rookery, of rotting tenements where, amid wife-beating, wife desertion, child-murder, and outrage, generation after generation passes away in filth and vice, steeped in dulness, sodden in brutality by drink; of the training house of the thief, and the den of the sweeter; the cell of the felon, and the grave of the suicide. According to various careful estimates, those who may be called the submerged classes, or the army of the destitute, are some three millions, one in ten of our people; a population equal to that of Scotland. However much we may try to escape from the burden of our common Christian duty by talking about exaggeration, the fact remains that at our very doors there is an awful waste of splendid human material, an awful shipwreck of redeemed humanity, of which the responsibility falls upon the Church, that is, on every one of us, and upon the nation, that is, on every one of us.

III. Such is the state of the present, and if we do not grapple with its evils, must not the future be far more terrible? Consider these common facts, which have again and again been thrust recently upon our notice. First, the country is being more and more depleted, the great cities are becoming more and more densely over-crowded, and in great cities there is always a tendency to the deterioration of manhood—morally, physically, and spiritually. Secondly, our population

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is increasing at the rate of nearly a thousand a day, and the most rapid increase is among the most destitute and unfit. Thirdly, in spite of all that temperance reformers have said and done, drink still continues to be the chief curse of our country, the awful waste of its resources, the utter ruin of tens of thousands of its sons, even last year was disgraced by an ugly rush to rum. Fourthly, the struggle between capital and labour, the moneyed classes and the destitute, the employer and the employed, the union man and the non-unionist, is constantly assuming proportions more menacing and more colossal; so that in this last year it has daily filled the hearts of all thinking men with anxiety lest it shook to its very foundations the structure of our national prosperity. Now to face these perils, to grapple with these difficulties, will need all our courage, all our wisdom, all our manhood, all our faith. But if we leave them, nearly one out of every ten of our population either helplessly sunk in pauperism or sodden with drink, or, at the least, steeped in grinding poverty, what will happen to us? We are truly warned that then the vicious habits and destitute circumstances of multitudes make it certain that without some kind of extraordinary help they must hunger and sin, and sin and hunger, until, having multiplied their kind and filled up the measure of their miseries, the gaunt fingers of death will close upon them and will terminate their wretchedness. Even while we are talking men are perishing on every side.

And this being so, what is the attitude of the nation toward this state of things? The attitude of some—let us hope they may be very few—is simply not to care about it at all, to live in pleasure on the earth and to be wanton, to have their hearts fat ‘as brawn,’ as cold as ice, as hard as the nether millstone, to heap up superfluous and often ill-gotten riches, to be hoarded in acquisition, squandered in luxury, or reserved for the building up of idle families. And to such men, if such there be, who squander their vast possessions on their own lusts and their own aggrandisement, to them comes the stern message of S. James: ‘Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Ye have lived delicately on the earth, ye have taken your pleasures, ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.’

The case lies wholly beyond the reach of isolated and often pernicious almsgiving. It needs the brave heart of a whole nation, it needs the courageous self-denial of a whole Church, it needs the heart’s co-operation of all true Christian men.

DEAN FARRAR.

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The Homes of the Poor.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. S. LUKE x. 32.

IT was the characteristic criticism of an eccentric divine, that there were a good many occasions in his own life when he found himself in something very like sympathy with this Levite. He took, I presume, that kindlier view of the Levite's character (from which there is nothing in Christ's parable that shuts us out), which sees in him a well-intentioned but inefficient person; and his notion, doubtless, was, that when the Levite, on his way to Jericho, finds his wretched fellow-countryman robbed, wounded, and half dead, by the roadside, he crosses over to observe him more closely, with a genuine impulse of sympathy and compassion. Nay, more: that when he finds the dismal extremity of the situation, he turns away, not because he has no pity, but because the circumstances that excited it appear to him so utterly hopeless. The traveller is all but dead. To move him may hasten his end. The ghastly wounds out of which his life is slowly ebbing would be closed, if closed at all, too late. The man might die on his hands, and then how could he prove that he had not killed him in a quarrel, or robbed and murdered him himself? It was very dreadful; but, what could one do? It was a case beyond cure, and one could only acknowledge its hopelessness and leave the victim to his fate.

There are a great many situations in life in which one seems almost shut up to the same conclusion. There are evils and miseries that we are all conscious of, that are like the habit of drunkenness. Alcoholism ultimately determines, often, the whole moral character. There is no meanness that its victim will not resort to, there is no falsehood that he will not utter, in order to gratify his inordinate craving for drink. And in such a case we are tempted to say, 'It is no use. There is no sense of shame to appeal to. There is no sentiment of honour to confide in. The man is a moral wreck. How dreadful it is!—and, how hopeless! We will go and look at him; but nothing remains to us after that but to leave him to his fate and pass on.'

It is of such an evil that I have been asked to speak to you to-day—an evil at which many of us, like the Levite, have looked, and then have turned away from, not because we did not deplore it, not because we would not gladly have put our hands to some endeavour for its remedy, but because the situation has seemed to us so hopeless, and the chances of effectual relief so dismally remote.

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There are living in New York to-day more than one million people—the precise figures, as closely as can be ascertained, are one million ninety-seven thousand five hundred and sixty-three. Of these there are one hundred and twenty-five thousand children under five years of age. The total number of deaths last year was twenty-seven thousand eight, or twenty-four per thousand, this death-rate being twenty-five per cent. higher than in Philadelphia. Of the whole number of deaths forty-six per cent. (or nearly half) were those of children under five years of age, and of this number of deaths seventy per cent. (or nearly three-fourths) occurred in, or in connection with, tenement houses. Finally, the number of people living in tenement houses is estimated at five hundred thousand, or at least half of our whole population.

I. In order to appreciate the situation of our tenement house population, you must add to the inevitable evils that come from over-crowded, ill-ventilated, viciously-arranged apartments, those others that come from intemperance and crime and neglect. Over against this wretched life, so scanty and so uninviting in its home-aspects, stands the gin palace and the corner grocery, in which heartlessness and greed conspire to demoralise the parents and rob the children. An incident like this is a sample of the infernal spirit which still has its way with but scant restraint. A labouring man out of work took to drink. He had no money, but the rum-seller, in spite of the remonstrances of the man's wife, sold him what he wanted on credit. Meantime the rum-seller's wife employed the labourer's wife to do plain sewing for her, and when the week's work was done, instigated by her husband, she withheld the money due, claiming it as a debt owed to the rum-seller for liquor furnished to the man whose heroic wife was thus striving to support herself and her children. Fortunately, the law was equal to the emergency in this instance; but in hundreds of others just as monstrous it is not. And as a consequence, side by side with all the evils inseparable from over-crowded tenements there reign unchecked those other evils which are the fruit of wide-spread intemperance and its consequent vice and crime.

II. But at this point it may be asked, 'Why do I speak of these things? Doubtless the condition of those who live in tenement houses is wretched enough, and the future of a city which endures them is gloomy enough, but after all, such questions are philanthropic rather than religious, a matter for the humanitarian rather than for the Christian. It may be well for us to walk across to the east side of the town and, like the Levite, look at our unhappy brother, fallen by the wayside, and worse than wounded and half dead; but the case is almost a hopeless one, and if it be not, it

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is not for us to consider it here. The Church exists in the interests of religion. Religion exists to show us how, in this world, to get ready for another. It exists to awaken sinners and to edify believers, and to comfort the sorrowful, and to speak words of hope and consolation to the mourner. It is a mistake when ministers turn aside from their proper work to give attention to these humanitarian schemes. Let them preach the gospel, and visit their people, and administer the Sacraments, and leave these outside interests to those who, having no gospel to preach, must needs supply its place with some philanthropic or humanitarian substitute. The Church was not organised to build model tenements, nor to diffuse sounder schemes of drainage or ventilation. Whenever it comes down from its high level, and turns aside from its more sacred functions, it forgets its dignity, and jeopardises its influence.

Somebody has said, in answer to such sentiments, that when men or institutions reach that point when they are chiefly concerned about conserving their dignity and their influence, they are very close to that period when they will cease to have either to conserve. Whether that be true or no, I am very sure that the Church was not organised to be chiefly concerned about watching her reputation or nursing her influence. As little, undoubtedly, was she organised to build model tenements and to organise stock-companies for the inauguration of a better system of drainage. Her kingdom is not of this world, and whenever she has undertaken to immerse herself deeply in secular affairs she has been more in danger of the secular spirit than even men of the world themselves. For one, I should not consider it a blessing, but an evil, if a capitalist should offer a million of dollars on condition that it expended that sum in rearing model dwellings for the poor and working classes, and assumed the business of their management. Managing real estate is not the calling of the Church, and few institutions are so poorly adapted for such a task as would be a parish or congregation.

But managing real estate is the business of the individual citizen, and as to the moral bearings of that or any other earthly business, the Church, as the witness and messenger of an eternal moral Governor, nay, as the messenger, most of all of a God once Incarnate in our common humanity, must needs, if it has any business at all in the world, have a good deal to say. I wonder if those who would so sharply confine the Church and the ministry to certain official and ceremonial functions have ever read the New Testament. We may take the ministry of Christ, I suppose, as at once a prophecy and pattern of what the work and ministry of the Church should be to-day. But Christ did not merely preach the Sermon on the Mount and die on the Cross. There was no disease so loathsome that He

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Gehazi's Lie.

But he went in, and stood before his master, and Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither. 2 KINGS v. 25.

GEHAZI'S punishment is startling, but its justice will be more apparent if we proceed to consider what it was in Gehazi's conduct which led up to his lie, and which, from his point of view, made it at the moment necessary for him to tell the lie.

I. Gehazi's conduct, then, involved, first of all, a violation of the trust which his master had reposed in him. Confidence is to society what cement is to a building—it holds all together. From the necessity of the case, we all of us place confidence in some persons, whether our elders or our children; whether our superiors or our servants; whether those from whom we learn or those whom we trust not to abuse the information with which we furnish them. And from the necessity of the case, no less, we all of us, until we have by some great crime forfeited our relations to society altogether, are the objects or recipients of confidence on the part of others, often of a great deal more confidence than we at all suspect, or than we deserve to have reposed in us. Confidence—it is the venture which every human being has to make in dealing with other human beings around him. Confidence—it is the honour, the high and ennobling honour, which in some degree every human being receives at the hand of his fellows, and which associates him, so far, with that highest power and goodness to which, in the last resort, we all of us commit our destinies and our lives. All our occupations in life, all our relations with one another, depend for their wellbeing upon the maintenance of confidence; and to justify confidence on the one hand, and to learn to place confidence largely in other men on the other, are essential conditions of any department of a man's daily public work. The conditions upon which trade is conducted are so largely, as we speak, artificial, that a shock to confidence is felt to be nothing less than a disorder of grave importance, and a violation of confidence a crime which can be with difficulty, if at all, atoned for by the offender. And this, mark you, is by no means a matter of arbitrary or merely human arrangement, it belongs to the very structure of society. It is the way in which one part of the law of God makes itself felt to be essential, even here and now, to the wellbeing of man. Confidence, I say, as vital to the wellbeing of society, is just as much God's appointment and work as the due action of the heart. As vital to the wellbeing of the human body is God's appointment and work. And society is guided by a true instinct when resenting and

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punishing a violation of confidence even with a severity which may, at first sight, appear to be violent or excessive.

Gehazi, then, was an offender against the obligations of confidence ; for he was not merely Elisha's servant ; he was also, to a great extent, a trusted companion ; I might dare to say, in a sense, his partner. Consider the part assigned to Gehazi in Elisha's dealing with the good Shunamite. On two occasions Elisha sends Gehazi with delicate messages to this distinguished lady. It is Gehazi who makes the suggestion that she is childless, and so leads the prophet to promise her a son. It is Gehazi who is sent on before the prophet and the sorrowing mother to lay Elisha's staff upon the face of the dead child. It is Gehazi who, in after years, when the Shunamite was claiming her property at the hands of the king of Israel, describes in glowing terms the deeds of the master from whose presence he was now banished for the remainder of his days. Yes, when it was all too late, Gehazi could feel what had been the honour of this association with the great teacher, with the lofty and saintly character, with the man who, in his simple and austere life, had such power with God that pagans, as well as Israelite kings and statesmen, as well as many of the people, trembled and bowed before him. It was association with such a man—it was this alone—which gave Gehazi what we call 'a position.' To be Elisha's servant was of itself a privileged post of commanding influence. We have already seen how the Syrian general acknowledged it. To be associated with Elisha in his work, to share his sympathies, and to a certain extent his counsels, to know what never could have been known but for this high companionship, would have been felt by a man with even the natural sense of honour to impose great and lasting obligations. And, accordingly, when Gehazi had once so far yielded to his covetous desires as to go after Naaman and negotiate for the treasure, his conscience told him—told him at once—that he had done that which his sense of honour itself condemned. To use the great position which his relation to Elisha had secured to him for a purpose which he knew Elisha would have disallowed—to employ the knowledge, the experience, the influence with other men, which such an intimacy conferred, in order to compass an end which he dared not acknowledge to the master whose generous confidence had made him what he was—this was to do an act which the pagans of Damascus, in their better moments, would have shrunk from doing.

And Gehazi could hardly stop here. We have heard, perhaps, of some clerk in a public office, or in a great mercantile house, who has sold information to which his position gave him access, with the result of enriching himself, but to the embarrassment, or to the serious loss, of his employers. No man having committed an act

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like that can say that he can go no further. He may well have no choice. The man who has acted against his sense of right is on the brink of lying against his sense of truth. Gehazi had to choose between a lie and humiliation; and when he had brought himself to prefer two talents of silver and two changes of raiment to the love and the trust of his great friend and patron, there is not much doubt what his choice would be.

II. And why was Gehazi's act so wrong in the eyes of Elisha? Because it involved a serious injury to the cause of true religion. What is said of our Lord and Saviour by the aged Simeon in the *Nunc Dimittis* was in a measure true of the religion of the prophets of Israel also. That religion had a double aspect. It was 'prepared before the face of all people to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of God's people.' When S. Paul wishes to mark the degradation of the Jews of his time he quotes a warning which, in slightly different terms, had been given by Nathan to David, by Isaiah and Ezekiel, respectively, to the men of their day, 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.' Israel had duties to the heathen; not, indeed, the great duty which is laid upon the Church of Jesus Christ, of bringing them all, as quickly and as surely as may be, into the true fold, but the duty of letting them at least see that there was a lamp of truth burning in the hearts of the one chosen people, by the light of which, if they would, they might read God's best lessons about themselves and about Him in nature and history. In Elisha's eyes the main interest of Naaman's visit was not that it was calculated to establish friendly political relations between Israel and Syria so long estranged, nor yet that it had resulted in a bodily cure which, from the eminence of the patient, could not but be famous throughout the neighbouring countries of the East, but that it had, and was likely to have, important results on the progress of true religion. Naaman, as we have seen, was, in effect, converted to faith in the one true God, and, therefore, everything that was likely to strengthen or weaken him in the religion of his choice was, in Elisha's eyes, of great importance—an importance altogether distinct in kind from that of any political or social event whatever; and here it was that conduct like Gehazi's was likely to act so very disastrously. Elisha had been careful to refuse all and any of the splendid presents which Naaman offered. If Naaman was to carry back with him a sound body, and, what was better, a soul illuminated by divine truth, Elisha was determined that these great blessings should not be associated in his mind with the petty details of a commercial transaction. God's great gifts in grace should surely resemble His gifts in nature in being bestowed with an open-handed generosity. The heathen were to come, in the

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language of prophecy, to the waters of salvation and to the waters of healing, without money and without price. But Gehazi's act, as it must have presented itself to Naaman, had all the appearance of an after-thought on the prophet's part, which would be fatal to his first and high idea of the prophet's disinterestedness. It may well have seemed to Naaman as if Elisha had repented at the last moment of his first large-heartedness, as if he had originally declined the presents from an impulsive enthusiasm which, after reasoning, would not last; as if the prophet of the true God was, after all, just like the rest of mankind in looking upon the high gifts of Heaven as having a marketable value, just like any of the wares that were exposed for sale in the bazaars of Damascus. Elisha foresaw this result as too likely to follow upon his servant's act; he foresaw the cynical recoil; perhaps the ruin or the apostasy of the recent, probably still hesitating, convert; and hence his searching, agonising question to Gehazi, 'Is this a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?'

We may be sure that Gehazi's conscience was sufficiently enlightened by association with Elisha to have anticipated and indorsed Elisha's feeling on the subject; and this would have been with him a second and more powerful reason for concealment, so long as he thought it possible, at any cost, for Gehazi would hardly have tried to persuade himself that, after all, he was not a prophet, and that a high view of duty, which would have been becoming in his master, was not necessary in him. It is, I take it, the modern conscience which indulges in these refinements upon the broad responsibilities of a position in life. Those who are associated with God's work in some capacity, less than the most responsible, are yet, in their degree, answerable for the success of that work—are bound, at the least, to do nothing that can hinder or can injure it. Not ordained clergymen only, but those who are connected with them by family ties, as wives or daughters, and those who, without being ordained, take part in the service of the Church whether in choirs or schools, or works of charity, are answerable, every one of them, for the effect of their conduct and bearing on men who are without any religion, but who, perhaps, are seeking one. Inconsistencies or works on the part of those who are associated with the work of Christ in the world, if not actually consecrated to promoting it—inconsistencies of which little is thought by those who are guilty of them—may, oh! believe it—be only too easily taken by others to be the measure of the practical worth of the Christian creed, and may have the effect of driving an inquirer back into the desert, when he is already almost within sight of the towers of Jerusalem. It is not the clergy alone—they

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have, indeed, to remember it, but it is not the clergy alone—who have to remember that there are things better worth living and working for than the two talents of silver and two changes of raiment which may possibly be filched from the world.

It was, then, Gehazi's sense of the character of his act in following after Naaman which led him into his great and deliberate sin against the law of truth. He had, indeed, found it necessary to deceive as soon as he began to do wrong. There is a nexus between one sin and another, just as there is a connection between one virtue and another. A man cannot stop his boat at will in the strong currents that run just above Niagara, though he might have avoided those currents at one time altogether. Gehazi's fiction about the needs of the two imaginary students from the schools of the prophets, his dismissal of Naaman's servants while under the cover of the hill which hid the proceeding from Elisha's eye, these were the preliminary stages of a falsehood by which Gehazi's connection was fatally and surely hardened up to the decisive point of declaring before his master that he had not been in pursuit of Naaman at all.

III. And here, as almost always, we remark the blindness of sin, blindness in the midst of so much ingenuity, so much contrivance. No one can know better than Gehazi that Elisha knew a great deal that was going on beyond the range of his eyesight. Why? As we heard, the slaves of the king of Syria said to their master that Elisha repeated to the king of Israel the words that the Syrian king uttered in his bed-chamber. Gehazi had had large opportunities of taking the measure of Elisha's power, and yet he set to work as if Elisha could know nothing that he did not witness with his bodily eyes. And this was the point of the other reproachful question, 'Went not my heart with thee when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?' It was folly, but it was folly of which almost every criminal trial in our courts affords a fresh example. Sin blinds men to the real circumstances with which they have to deal. Above all, it destroys their power of apprehending the presence and the omniscience of God. What Gehazi thought of Elisha, all sinners, with infinitely less reason, think about Almighty God. 'Tush, the Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.' The wasted ingenuity of a diseased or a violated conscience, culminating first in outrageous falsehood, and then in conspicuous disgrace, are, as the moral world goes, quite in order.

Gehazi's punishment seemed severe, but it marks a fact which we do well to remember, the fact that the injury which a deliberate falsehood inflicts on the moral nature is, in this life, irreparable. I do not say that a lie cannot be forgiven. God forbid! That would be to limit His mercy in Jesus Christ; nor do I say that a habit of substantial

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truthfulness may not be restored. God forbid! That would be to limit the efficacy of His grace in Jesus Christ. But when the lie has been pardoned and the habit of truth re-established, the effect of the lie still remains. The shock which it has inflicted on the more delicate fibres of the moral nature issues in a permanent weakness, which shows itself when any demand or strain is put upon high principle. A man who has once told a very deliberate lie, mark, I do not speak of any form or degree of involuntary falsehood, the man who, looking truth right in the face, has deliberately contradicted it knowing it to be truth, is like a man who has lost a lung. He may get on pretty well so long as over-exposure and over-exertion do not tax his resources. He is of the nature of a moral invalid, and there is no saying when or how his constitution may not give way. And Gehazi's leprosy expressed this. It was a visible symbol of the moral and inward fact, the fact that Gehazi's moral nature was permanently damaged. Gehazi could not be again as he was. He must carry with him to his grave the brand of humiliation and of weakness. He could not, either as a liar or as a leper, live with Elisha. The matter was forbidden by the terms of the Jewish law. The former was inconsistent with the rule of every good Israelite's household. 'There shall no deceitful person dwell in my house. He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.' And so Gehazi went forth, to mourn for a lifetime the folly and the wickedness which had led him to throw away the companionship and the confidence of so good and great a friend.

And Gehazi's fall teaches us three practical lessons. One is to keep our desires in order if we mean to keep out of grave sin. As S. James says, 'Lust,' or desire, 'when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.' That is the order of growth in evil, and the practical rule is, therefore, *obsta principiis*, put a stop to the process, if you can, in the very beginning. If Gehazi had not cast those longing eyes upon the Syrian wealth, he would never have entered upon the series of acts which culminated in his great lie, and in his life-long leprosy. If Christ our Lord is to reign over our hearts and tongues, He must be enthroned, first of all, by His Spirit, in those hearts out of which, in His absence, evil desires are ever flowing.

And a second lesson is the danger of thinking that great religious advantages of themselves protect a man against grievous sins. The illusion is common. Experience in all ages quite contradicts it. What religious advantages in that day could be greater than those of Gehazi? Naaman, while still a pagan, could have told Gehazi that a lie is moral degradation; and the high aspirations for a new religious life in the court and the people of Israel, which Gehazi

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would have often heard from his master's lips, should have led him to think that he too lived in a moral atmosphere in which attention to the simplest and primary rules of good living might be taken for granted. A lofty ideal, like the Sermon on the Mount, or like the discourse in the upper room, does not oblige those who have it before their eyes to be true even to those virtues which the heathen honoured; the grace of the Holy Spirit, and of the Christian Sacraments, does not put force upon reluctant wills, or compel us to practise even natural goodness if we are not so minded. What can be more distressing than the spectacle of men whose education and friendships and work at times, it may be, pointed to all the higher standards of the gospel, and who yet, in the presence of temptation, have fallen below what is required of men of the world? 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'

And the last lesson is the priceless value of truthfulness in the soul's life. No advantage whatever of mind, or body, or estate, can counterbalance the misery of indifference to truth. No faults, however grave, are irreparable when the soul still clings to a love of truth. Truth is the basis of all other natural virtues in the human soul. It is the basis of all true religion, courage, justice, temperance. What are these but products of the sense of truth, dictating the forms of virtuous effort which are required by different circumstances? It is the sense of truth, as well as the voice of the Apostle, which tells us that 'if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' It is the sense of truth which bids us pray for God's pardoning mercy in Jesus Christ, because we know what we are as sinners. It is the sense of truth which leads us to seek God's grace from His Holy Spirit and in His Sacraments, for we know our weakness when we are left to ourselves. Truth, it is the one condition of all moral and religious progress. It were, indeed, better, in the phrase of the old Greeks, even to perish in the light than to miss truth altogether; but as matters stand, we Christians know that 'if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,' and that, for the rest, 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'

H. P. LIDDON.

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The Word and the Preacher.

In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. And he said unto him, Go in peace.' 2 KINGS v. 18, 19.

I HAVE no intention of going into the details of Elisha's history. But there are one or two particulars in it, on which, as they present some degree of difficulty and have been laid hold of by those who seek occasion against Holy Scripture, it may not be unreasonable to bestow a deliberate and sober consideration.

I. The first of them is the treatment of the children who mocked Elisha in the outskirts of Bethel. Elisha's conduct in this instance is not what we should have looked for: nor is it in keeping with the general benevolence of his character. They who have no reverence for God's saints, and who judge them by what comes under their own cognisance and that alone, would have no scruple in ascribing it to irritation; or in speaking of the punishment which the prophet's imprecation drew down upon the offenders as strangely disproportioned to the offence. But what is the view which Christian piety would dictate?

First of all, it is to be observed that God heard and ratified the imprecation. The punishment which followed was of God's infliction. God, therefore, if we may reverently say so, made Himself responsible for the charge of severity. They who blame, blame God, not man.

Still, no doubt, the case is a perplexing one; but it is one of many in which, if we cannot give an account wholly satisfactory, we are called upon to suspend our judgments, not doubting that if we knew all the circumstances our perplexity would be removed. And this is really the feeling with which a reverential mind will regard Scripture difficulties generally. Its thoughts will be that which a loving child has in reference to the conduct of a good and wise parent in whom he reposes entire confidence. There may be, the Christian will say—there may be, as confessedly there are, perplexing things, in some of God's dealings recorded in Scripture; so there are also in his providential dealings, such as we see them in the world around us. But they do not trouble me. Where I can discern a reason for them—or as far as I can—well and good—I rejoice to see His hand. Where I cannot, I rest with entire confidence on the wisdom, and justice, and goodness of my heavenly Father. What He does I know not now, but perhaps I shall know hereafter, and the reason why He does it. For the present I am content to walk by faith; to believe, where I do not see.

Such reflections, it is true, will afford little satisfaction to the

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scoffer, though a glance at the world in which he lives might convince him there is reason in them; but they will not seldom free the Christian from perplexing thoughts.

To return, however, to the incident before us. If we cannot discern the whole of the account which is to be given, we may at least discern some reasons which may serve to explain the severity of the punishment.

If there was one spot in the whole kingdom of Israel which more than any other had made itself obnoxious to God's judgments, Bethel was that spot. It was connected by hallowed associations with the earliest history of the Hebrew people. Twice had God appeared there to their ancestor, each time giving him the assurance of his favour, and revealing the blessings which he had in store for his descendants; and the name 'Bethel'—the House of God—remained a memorial of these gracious communications. But 'Bethel' had now become 'Bethaven'—the House of Vanity—the house of naught. There Jeroboam had set up his calves—making it the great centre of that idol-worship by which the Israelites were drawn aside from the service of the God of their fathers. Bethel was in fact to the kingdom of the ten tribes for evil, what Jerusalem and the Temple were designed to be for the whole race of Israel, for good. It was the heart from which the life-blood of idolatry circulated through the land. Need we wonder then that in a dispensation, which was characterised by a system of temporal rewards and punishments, some signal display of God's justice should be manifested towards such a place on the occurrence of a special occasion to call it forth? Such an occasion there was in the present instance. The scoffing cry of the children too accurately reflected the infidel and apostate spirit of their parents, and the terrible fate which befel the one was a meet chastisement of the other: a chastisement which would be felt the more keenly by those whose consciences were not seared beyond all feeling from the circumstance of the youthful age of those who were its immediate subjects. If these things were done in the green tree, it would be obvious to ask, what would be done in the dry?

There can be no doubt that the scoffing words which formed the burthen of the children's cry referred to the ascension of Elijah, and were uttered in ridicule of the account of it which had been circulated, and as such, that they did indicate an infidel spirit, and as such were punished. But they were also a contumelious reproach directed against Elisha, and against Elisha, as God's servant, and He who said, 'Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm,' regarded the insult as an insult offered to Himself, and did not suffer it to go unpunished.

The fate then which befell these youths was to the men of their

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generation a protest against idolatry generally, and in particular it held out an awful warning against a scoffing spirit, especially when the objects of its ridicule are God's servants, and still more God's ministers.

And assuredly the lesson is for us also. It shows us in what light God regards such a spirit and the manifestations of it.

For it does not follow, because this or the other form of evil is suffered ordinarily to go unpunished, that it is not highly displeasing to God, and will not eventually receive that recompense which is due to it. The occasional instances which are recorded in Scripture, or which come within the range of our own experience, of terrible and startling chastisements following close upon the heels of transgressions stand out as warnings against the sins which drew them down. Every lie is not visited with prompt punishment, but the fate of Ananias and Sapphira declares what God's mind is with regard to lying; every instance of covetousness is not at once detected and exposed, but the leprosy of Gehazi has set God's mark of reprobation upon such deeds for ever. Every instance of intemperance—every instance of unbridled lust—is not followed by immediate tokens of God's displeasure—but occasionally when some startling case occurs—as when one has been hurried out of the world from a scene of debauchery, or another has been summoned to his account from a harlot's bed—here again we are shown in what light God views such sins—and so in like manner, though every instance of ridicule directed against religion or the ministers of religion, as such, or God's servants, as such, is not followed by speedy punishment, yet the fate which befel these youths at Bethel, is a warning once for all—for us as well as for the people of their own day and generation, that sooner or later such conduct shall receive the due recompense of reward.

Nor is the warning, as far as this age is concerned, a needless one.

II. The destruction of the children at Bethel is not the only incident in Elisha's history which has proved a stumbling-block. His solution of the case of conscience which Naaman the Syrian proposed to him has seemed to some like a sanction given to insincerity, and that in a matter, where, of all others, a frank and fearless avowal of a man's principles is required. 'In this thing,' Naaman asks—'In this thing, the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.' Should we not have expected to find the prophet forbidding him to go into the house of Rimmon at all—or at any rate forbidding him to use a gesture which if it did not give, might seem to give religious worship to an idol? Yet Elisha says to him, 'Go in peace.'

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The act was not an idolatrous act. It was not intended by Naaman as such—it was not meant to have the appearance of being such. Had he stood apart, and bowed himself of his own accord, or at his master's command, there would have been at least the simulation of worship, and that of course would have been highly sinful. But the circumstances which it so pointedly and of set purpose specified, of the king leaning upon his hand, alters the whole case. His bowing of himself was no more a voluntary act than was his accompanying of his master into the temple. It was simply mechanical, such an inclination of his body as obeisance of his master rendered necessary. If it be urged that he did wrong in allowing himself to be made passively accessory to an act of idolatry, I can only reply, the prophet does not appear to have thought so, and if the prophet did not, we may well believe that the prophet's Master would not have imputed it to him for sin—that Master—of whom it is written that He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, and who defended His disciples, when some would have required of them a degree of austerity which as yet they were not able to bear, by the apposite illustration that new wine must not be put into old bottles.

And herein Elisha's dealing with Naaman holds out an instructive lesson to those who have to do with new converts, or with persons who are newly awakened to the importance of a religious life. It is natural to such persons to have scruples—often well-founded scruples—but not always well-founded. As they advance in the Christian life, become better acquainted with Scripture, have their spirits more thoroughly assimilated to its spirit, and grow up into a surer confidence in their own sincerity and singleness of purpose, these scruples will decrease, and they will see their way intuitively, but in the meantime it is of no little consequence to them that they should have the advantage of prudent, sober, godly advisers, of persons who see clearly where a principle is involved, and where there is nothing of the sort, and who in the one case will bid them set their faces like a flint; in the other, will deal gently and tenderly by them, taking heed lest they should lay upon them a burthen which in their present stage they are not able to bear.

Such an adviser was S. Paul. Most instructive it is to observe with what clearness and distinctness he apprehended the system which it was his mission to preach; and it is the more remarkable, unless we bear in mind who was His teacher, when it is considered how many Jewish prejudices he had to overcome. When a principle was involved, no consideration in the world would induce him to swerve to the right hand or to the left. He was ready to withstand even the very chiefest of his brother Apostles rather than yield a hair's-breadth

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of the liberty which was the right of the Gentile converts. But where the matter was a matter of indifference, he was prepared to become all things to all men, and to advise others to become so too.

C. HEURTLEY.

Great Things and Small.

My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?
2. KINGS v. 13.

1. 'IF the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?' How many persons are there, sufficiently desirous of salvation to have been tolerant of a very burdensome ritual, had the gospel prescribed it, who yet find in the fewness and simplicity of its authorised observances an excuse for disregarding them altogether. I do not doubt that there are many here present, who, if they had been commanded to perform certain acts of worship seven times in a day, to undergo great privations and make great sacrifices in order to accomplish a very wearisome round of ritual ceremonies, would have found in the mere difficulty of compliance a motive for obedience. There is evidently something in human nature, not only which is roused by difficulties, but which is flattered by demands. Let a man suppose that heaven is to be won by punctuality of observance, and he will count every added ceremony not only a fresh stimulus but a new honour. And yet the same person cannot be brought to regard with proper respect the moderate and quiet services of his own Church, the humble instrumentality of preaching, or the two Sacraments which Christ has ordained. If you wish to gain his attention at all, you must add to these true and just requirements a multitude of others which rest but on opinion or fancy. He cannot be brought to see that a simple ordinance like that of Christian baptism can derive any importance from the fact of Christ's institution, of Christ's command. He cannot understand how there should be any connection at all between the washing of water and the condition of a soul; between the putting away, as S. Peter expresses it, of the filth of the flesh, and the answer of a good conscience toward God. If he brings his child to the font, it is in compliance with the world's custom rather than with the Saviour's word. He cannot see that the very simplicity of the sign is rather an argument for than against its divine origin. If man had had the ordaining of it, certainly it would have been something more difficult, more cumbrous, and more costly. In the same way he refuses to believe that there can be anything beneficial to the soul in eating a morsel

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of Bread or drinking a few drops of Wine at the table of his Lord. He asks again, What can be the connection in such matters between the body and the soul? How can the food of the body be in any sense the strengthening of the soul? He can understand that what he calls a good life, or even a devout and pious spirit, may be an acceptable offering; but he cannot believe—he will almost say so in words—that it can be a matter of the slightest moment whether or no he performs that outward act of communion which nevertheless he cannot deny to be distinctly ordained and plainly commanded in the gospel. If the prophet, if the Saviour, had bidden him to do some great thing, he would certainly have done it: but he cannot bring himself to believe and obey, when the charge is that simple one to wash and be clean.

II. The same tendency is exemplified in reference to the doctrines of the gospel.

They who would have done some great thing will not do that which is less; they who would be willing to toil on under hard conditions, to go heavily all their days in the bitterness of their soul, to walk mournfully and fearfully along the path of life before the Lord of Hosts, if haply they might at length attain, by pains and cares and tears, to the resurrection of the just, will not accept the tidings of an accomplished forgiveness, will not close with the offer of a positively promised Spirit; and thus fulfil, again and again, the description of the text, 'If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean!'

III. We may add yet another illustration, drawn from the requirements of the gospel.

So long as a person is walking altogether in darkness, the demands of the gospel give him little trouble. He heeds them not. They may be light, or they may be grievous, the commands of God are for him as if they were not. If he keeps any of them, it is by chance; it is because natural disposition runs, in that respect, for him, in the groove of right, in the track of duty. But when, if ever, he begins to feel that he has a soul to be saved; that God has a will concerning him, which it is life to obey and death to contradict; how often is it seen that, that in the pursuit of some great thing, in the search for something arduous and something new, he loses altogether the duty and the blessing which lay at his very door, in his very path, could he but have seen them, and shows, unknown to himself, a spirit of self-will and self-pleasing at the very moment when he seems to be asking most humbly, what is the will of God concerning him.

How have whole systems of religion been founded upon the forget-

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fulness of this principle ! Men have either gone out of the world, or sought to render themselves or others miserable in it, just because they thought it necessary to do some great thing in order to please God ! What is monastic life in all its forms and degrees, the endeavour to escape from the temptations of society and to anticipate heaven by a life here below of uninterrupted devotion, but a neglect of the principle suggested by the text ? And what is asceticism in all its forms and degrees, the refusal to one's-self of life's simple comforts, the prohibition of marriage and the commanding to abstain from meats, the substitution of a system of self-torture for a spirit of temperance and of thankfulness, but a neglect of the same wise and wholesome caution, that what God looks for in us is, not the doing of some great thing, but the endeavour to be pure and holy in the performance of common duties and in the use of lawful enjoyments ? And how true is it, in all these cases, that the easy thing is not always the small thing, that to some natures it is far more attractive to have a high thing, a great thing, a novel thing, proposed to them, than a level, an ordinary, or an old duty, pressed upon them ; inso-much that he who would have exalted himself to the one cannot humble himself to the other, and he who would have buried himself in a cloister, or foregone every luxury and every amusement, without murmuring or complaint, cannot bring himself to be an exemplary man in life's common or natural relations, cannot set himself vigorously to that which brings with it neither applause nor self-congratulation, the fulfilment, as in God's behalf, as in Christ's service, of the little every-day duties of kindness, of self-denial, and of charity, the careful walking in a trivial round, the punctual, loving performance of a common task !

DEAN VAUGHAN.

The Reality of Invisible Things.

When the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold, an host encompassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do ? And he answered, Fear not ; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw ; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. 2 KINGS vi. 15-17.

THE distinguishing mark of a religious man is his attitude toward invisible things : he discerns them, while others do not.

The case in the text ; when Jesus recognised the Holy Ghost others saw only a dove ; when He heard the voice of God others said it thundered, etc.

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These invisible things the subject-matter of Christian faith : God, Providence, Immortality, etc.

The Scripture claims for these the utmost reality. 'The things which are seen are temporal,' etc.

Upon what does this peculiarity, faculty of vision, rest ?

I. Upon the analogy of natural things.

The great forces are invisible.

Contrast the seeming force of Niagara with the subtle power of evaporation which lifts to the clouds three times the amount of water which goes over the Falls.

Contrast the force of a storm piling up waves with the attraction of the moon 'drawing the tides at her queenly skirts.'

So also in the moral world :

Men's motives more real than their actions.

The effect of a panic in battle, or in business. (An invisible but terribly real fact.)

II. This Christian claim of spiritual faculty is contrary to the spirit of the age—or of any age.

When our Lord said, 'My word shall not pass away,' etc., He was not believed.

Which of the two would their contemporaries have said to be most likely to survive in influence, S. Paul or the sweet Gallio ?

III. How then is our sure faith in invisible things justified ?

1. By what it does.

The Law of Gravity made a place for itself in virtue of the problems it solved.

[Fancy some old astrologer in his tower with a new copy of the *Principia* before him,—his anger and apprehension !]

The fact of the clear moral judgments of these people who see the 'invisible things of God' !

IV. This invisibility is both the strength and the weakness of Christianity.

It, by contrast with the hard present, seems unreal.

(The young man could see the enemy at once, but could not discern the succour until by prayer he came into a spiritual mind.)

But it is also its security.

Its enemies can never discover it.

It grows like seed ; as well argue against the movements of the stars, or attack the progress of springtime by artillery !

S. D. M'CONNELL.

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Angelic Guardians.

Alas, my master ! how shall we do ? And he answered, Fear not ; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. 2 KINGS vi. 15, 16.

THE King of Syria, hearing that Elisha by his prophetic knowledge informed the King of Israel of the orders he gave in his bed-chamber that his army should encamp in such and such a place, so that he, the King of Israel, might order his armies to avoid that place, sent his soldiers to take Elisha. When the servant of Elisha saw the city surrounded by the army of the Syrians he was struck with fear, till Elisha asked God to open his eyes, at which he saw the city surrounded with the hosts of heaven to defend his master.

I. Now there is a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews in which we are told that we of the Christian Church, even whilst we are on earth, are come to the Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels. We are just as much surrounded by these angelic beings as was Elisha and his servant. Nothing then can happen to us except by the permission of God, and we shall not know till we are in another world, how often we have been defended and rescued by them in this.

II. But we have more than this fellowship with, and defence by angels. If we are on the side of God, then we have God with us ; nay, we have much more than this, for the angels seem to be external to us, whereas we are told by the Apostle S. John (1 Epis. iv. 4), that ‘greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world.’ And so another Apostle asks, ‘Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good ?’ and another says, ‘All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.’

M. F. SADLER.

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V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

The Law a Schoolmaster.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. GALATIANS iii. 24.



THIS is one of those sentences often to be met with in S. Paul, into which he compresses an entire world of thought and feeling—sentences in which the message that he has to announce reaches its tersest and most vigorous expression. S. Paul is explaining to the Galatian Christians, some of whom were inclined to go back to Jewish usages, the true place and office of the old Jewish law in the religious history of man. And by ‘the law’ he means, not simply the Ten Commandments or even the whole body of precepts contained in the books of Moses, but the sacred literature and ordinances as received in their entirety by the Jewish people in his own day. Of the law taken in this broad and comprehensive sense he asserts that it was a schoolmaster to bring Jews by birth, like himself, to faith in and love for our Lord Jesus Christ. The original word translated ‘schoolmaster’ in this passage does not mean the master of a school. It was the name of a slave who had charge of his owner’s children, and who, among other duties, led them by the hand to the porch, or the house, where the teacher who was really to instruct them gave his lessons. This slave was not merely a servant who kept the children neat and out of the way of danger: he was a sort of private tutor as well, who prepared them for the instructions which they were to receive from the philosopher or professor whose class they attended. These higher lessons were quite beyond the power of the tutor himself to give, but he could do something in the way of removing difficulties which prevented young people from understanding what they were taught; and, above all, he could take care that those intrusted to his charge should be punctually in their place when the philosopher or professor began his work.

Now, by this reference to the family arrangements of the ancient world S. Paul is able to place before his readers, very clearly, the real relation of the Jewish law to the gospel and faith of Christ. S. Paul takes up a middle position on the subject, between those who so exaggerated the importance of the Jewish law as to consider it a

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final revelation from God to man, and those, on the other hand, who went so far as to speak of it as, religiously, useless. No, the law was not final, for Jesus Christ had come, and His gospel, although based upon it, had superseded it. No, the law was not useless, for it was a tutor charged with the high and honourable duty of bringing the Jewish people down to the school of Christ. In the Apostle's eyes there had been, now for some four-and-twenty years, one great school open to all the races of mankind, and in which alone instruction was to be had respecting the objects which are best worth every man's attentive study; and that school was the Church of Jesus Christ. In S. Paul's eyes there was one great teacher—only one—who had absolute claims upon the intellectual and moral allegiance of man—one prince of philosophers and poets and prophets, at whose voice all others should hold their peace, since, while they only could guess at truth, or could teach it in fragments, He possessed and proclaimed it in its entirety without error and without imperfection, for in Him were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And since His Incarnation He had sat as the light and instructor of the nations, first, visibly, during the years of His earthly ministry, and then, invisibly, as speaking through His Apostles and His Church. He was the true master of souls, through whom the eternal God would teach mankind its highest lessons, and the value of all other teachers simply varied with their disposition or their power to lead mankind to become His pupils. Pagan religion and pagan philosophy did this service occasionally and incidentally for men of pure and noble character, but the law and religion of Israel was, from first to last, a preparation for Him. It was 'a shadow of good things to come.' It was a tutor, whose business and privilege it was to point the way to the dwelling of the great Master.

Now, how did the Jewish religion or law answer to S. Paul's description? What were the means by which it did lead honest hearts and minds away from allegiance to itself, and end by handing them over to the Church, or school of Christ?

There were three main ways, among others, by which this was effected.

I. The religion of Israel brought men to Christ, first of all, by the light—I may say by the constraining force—of prophecy. If any people were ever encouraged by their sacred literature to live in and for the future, that people was Israel. From Genesis to Malachi there is a long chain of predictions—predictions at first vague and indeterminate, and then, as the centuries passed, becoming narrower, clearer, more and more definite, until at last they might seem to close around their object and to describe Him by anticipation,

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but completely. First a human deliverance of some kind, then a personal Saviour, is announced. He is to come of the descendants of Abraham, then of the race of Israel, then of the tribe of Judah, then of the family of David. He is to be a monarch and yet a sufferer. He is to be born supernaturally, and yet He is to die. He is to be buried, and yet he is to conquer the allegiance of the world. This one prediction, indeed, must have struck, as it did strike, thoughtful Jews as something peculiarly astonishing—that from their own little country there would arise a teacher whose life would be marked by humiliation and by apparent failure, while in the end he would bring the proud heathen peoples around to the knowledge of the true God. For many a year such language must have seemed too good, as we say, to be true—too evidently the imagining of pious prophets and teachers to have any destined place in the world of hard facts: and yet there it was in the sacred books of Israel. There it was, confronting one generation after another. There it was, sometimes neglected, sometimes studied intently, then again cast aside—the object of awful wonder, of wild misunderstanding, of audacious speculation. There it was, at once a rebuke and an encouragement—a difficulty and yet a witness and a guarantee—a lamp to the feet and a light to the paths, and yet a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, as fathers and sons and grandsons, one after another, read it and passed away. And, at last, He to whom it pointed came Himself among men, and then these words had done their work, just as light along the line of the horizon disappears when we see the orb of the rising sun. He did die in humiliation and in shame, and then He passed on to be the spiritual conqueror of the world. He was exactly what prophecy had foretold. He Himself appealed to prophecy as warranting His claims. He claimed to be exactly what it had sketched beforehand. ‘Search the Scriptures,’ He said to the Jews of His day, ‘for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me.’ And so to His perplexed disciples after the Resurrection: ‘O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ ‘And then beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.’ And thus when S. Peter is arguing with Christians who believe in an ascended Saviour, he says, ‘We have not followed cunningly devised fables.’ He refers, first of all, to what he himself had seen at the Transfiguration, and then he adds, ‘We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.’ And the first

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book of the New Testament—S. Matthew's Gospel—was written mainly with the object of showing in detail to the Christians of Judea that Jesus of Nazareth fully corresponded to the Christ of prophecy. Again and again we meet with the phrase 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,' as though it was not more true that prophecy had been given to lead men to Christ than that Christ had come to justify the truth of prophecy. Read that first gospel through and observe how in it the scattered sayings of the Jewish prophets are brought to a focus and seem to centre in and to be satisfied by one single life. See how prophecy and the law takes Israel by the hand and leads him down to the Redeemer as the certificate of its truth—as the object of its existence.

II. The Jewish religion, secondly, brought men to Christ by that ceremonial law which formed so important a part of it. It invested with ceremony the worship of God—the great occasions of state—the private events of human life. Ceremony is a kind of language; it is a means of conveying ideas from mind to mind. It is the language not of speech but of action. It is less explicit than the words we use: it is often more suggestive. Every day of our lives, as we stand face to face with each other, a thousand gestures render words unnecessary and convey more meaning than words could convey. Every day of our lives, during our intercourse with each other, we read this language of action as we listen to that other language of the tongue. We try and interpret the words that we hear by what we observe of the expressive gestures which accompany them. Ceremony, as an instrument for expressing ideas, strikes its roots far into the original instincts of our common nature; and when God embodied it largely in the religion which He gave to Israel He had much deeper purposes in view than lay on the surface of that which He prescribed. Never let us forget, as we read such books as Leviticus, that the ancient ritual of Israel was not of human origin—that it was enjoined from heaven. Doubtless, it was intended to give shape, expression, fixity, to the solemn faith in and worship of God, which was revealed to Israel. Doubtless, too, it was meant to establish a barrier, visible to sense, between the people of revelation and the heathen races around. But these results might, conceivably, have been secured by other rites than those which are commanded in the Jewish law; and the ritual of Leviticus has a meaning and a value over and above this. It was throughout a sort of acted prophecy. It looked forward—every detail of it—to a coming time—to a higher worship—to a religion of which it was but the shadow thrown forward, provisionally, across the ages, until the complete reality which it heralded should at length appear.

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‘What is the meaning’—pious Jews must have again and again exclaimed—‘what is the meaning of all these carefully elaborated rites—of these solemn days, these costly dresses, these blood-stained sacrifices? Why these and no others? Why these details, many of them, apparently, so trivial, yet enforced by sanctions so imposing and so awful?’ The answer was that all this ceremonial law has an object beyond itself. It is the shadow of good things to come: it is not the very image of the things. It is a teacher who will lead his pupils to the feet of one to whose person and work he thus perpetually refers in the language—the expressive language—of symbol. All that could be gathered from the ceremonial law before Christ’s coming was that it meant a something beyond itself. What it meant could only be known afterwards, and in the light of the gospel. Jews could not have guessed exactly that the Sabbath pointed to the eternal rest of heaven, and circumcision to the purification of man’s nature by a new birth, and the paschal lamb to the Divine Victim offered for human sin on Mount Calvary, and the table of shewbread to the Blessed Sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood. We Christians see all this. We see much more, plainly enough, but we could hardly have divined it if we had lived in the ages before the Incarnation. But when Christ came, this key to the meaning of the Jewish ceremonial was seen to fit. It pointed to Him and to His redemptive work from first to last. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to show this—to show that the ceremonial law of the Jews was far from being a final and complete rule of life and worship—did but prefigure blessings that were to follow it, that it was a tutor to lead men to the school of Christ.

III. Thirdly, the Jewish law or religion brought men to Christ by creating a sense of moral need which He alone could satisfy; for it was not merely a collection of prophecies or a code of ceremonial: it was also, and chiefly, a body of moral precepts respecting conduct. The duty of the sacred people, the duty of its kings and its priests, the duty of each individual Israelite towards God and towards his fellow-man—these it ruled in detail. The Ten Commandments are, at this moment, the moral rule of Christendom, and, as might be shown, if time sufficed, they contain, in a compendious form, an exhaustive statement of human duty towards the author of our being, and towards our fellow-creatures. It was this law which the pious Israelite embroidered on his robe. It was this law of which the King of Israel sang that it was an undefiled law converting the soul; that, as the testimony of the Lord, it was sure, giving wisdom to the simple; that, as the statutes of the Lord, it was right and rejoiced the heart; that, as the commandment of the Lord, it was pure, giving light unto the eyes, and that, as a whole, more to be

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desired was it than gold, 'yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.'

Such was the moral law given to Israel, and yet, practically, it seemed to be a failure. It was not kept. Even the best Israelites did not keep it, while the greater number neglected it altogether. S. Paul quotes from the Jewish scriptures severe sentences which, taken broadly, describe what was the condition of Israel in his own day. 'It is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become abominable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.' And, as he proceeds, the severity of the description grows apace. 'Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.' And then the Apostle anticipates a Jewish objection, that this language for the most part describes, in the original, the moral condition of heathens, not of Jews; and he answers it by appealing to a principle insisted on by the Jewish doctors themselves, that the law spoke, in the first instance, not to all the world but only to the chosen people. 'We know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law.' Israel was, in fact—he and they knew it—Israel was, in fact, as bad as its sacred books described. It made its boast in the law, but in breaking the law it dishonoured God.

How was this to be explained? How was it consistent, men have asked, with the Creator's wisdom that He should have given to His people a law which He must have foreseen would not be observed? S. Paul answers this by saying that the law was given to teach man an ideal or a rule of righteousness, and thereby it discovered to him his own sinfulness and weakness. 'Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions.' It brought them to light: it carried the lamp of moral truth into the dark places of the human conscience. It taught sinful man to see himself, at least in part, as God sees him. Nay, it did more. The presence of this divine rule of right stimulated the dormant sinfulness of human nature to new activity. 'Without the law sin was dead, but when the commandment came sin revived.' 'But is not this,' it might have been asked—'Is not this a heavy indictment against the divine author of the law, that it might actually promote the energy of sin?' 'No,' the Apostle replies: 'the real promoter of sin is not the law, but the debased dispositions of man.' Good food is poison to a diseased body. The sunshine only shrivels the sickly plant, but the food and

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the sunshine are God's blessing, notwithstanding, to healthy natures. And the moral law is not in itself less holy and just and good because sinful man is irritated by it into new acts of disobedience. 'What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet; but sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.'

The moral law—God's essential indestructible moral nature in its relation to human life, thrown for practical purposes, into the form of commandments—the moral law is essentially, necessarily, beyond criticism; but when given to sinful man it does, but without grace, discover a want which it cannot satisfy. Nay, such was man's condition in that older dispensation that it was the occasion of aggravating the evil which it could not heal, and thus it was that the moral law like the Jewish ritual—like Jewish prophecy, but with more effective power than either, led man down to the school of the Redeemer. It disclosed wants, heartaches, miseries, which He alone could heal and satisfy. It enhanced the aching sense of unpardoned sin before a holy God. 'Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His Blood.'

And the law, further, convinced man of his moral weakness as well as of his guilt—of his inability without the strengthening grace of Christ ever to obey it. But then 'what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.' To Christ the law leads down, not merely as a pardoner of guilt, but as a giver—as a source—of moral force which will do what man of his own strength cannot possibly do. This new life of obedience prompted from within by a new moral power, and not imposed from without upon moral decrepitude, S. Paul calls 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.' It is the gift of our divine and gracious Master—His greatest and most signal gift to those who simply accept Him.

How it is claimed must be discussed, please God, hereafter. For

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the present, let us observe what we may learn from the Jewish law that is thus described as leading us as a tutor to Jesus Christ.

1. In these words we see a test of the value of all religious privileges or gifts. Do they or do they not lead souls to Christ? That is the question. It is the supreme question for a Christian. In S. Paul's eyes it was the high distinction of the Jewish law that it could thus lead the Jewish people to faith in—to love for—the divine Redeemer; and this surely is the criterion which we Christians should apply to the several agencies, persons, privileges, pursuits, which bear upon or which belong to religion. Are they likely to make us give more of our thought and heart and will to our Saviour; or will they interest us mainly in themselves, and so keep us at a distance from Him? Doubtless in this matter a great deal depends upon a man himself. The majority of the people of Israel were not led to Christ in S. Paul's day, but the fault did not lie with the Jewish law; and if in the present day we hear, as we do sometimes hear, people saying, that Church privileges do not lead them to Christ, the explanation, I apprehend, is not to be found in the services of the Church, which are full of Christ from first to last, but in something wrong in these persons themselves. Unless there be in the soul that sacred yearning for better things which will make most of the opportunities offered to it, no external privilege will of itself lead to the knowledge and to the love of the Redeemer. In all generations some souls appear to live on crumbs, while others perish amid profusion. This man has no divine worship at hand, no communions, no religious friendships, no instruction; yet he gathers up the fragments which remain in memory of a privileged boyhood; and for him the wilderness blossoms as the rose. And that man lives surrounded by all the means of grace, flooded by the light which streams from heaven, and yet he might as well be a heathen. This man finds in the divine Scripture only arguments to justify his unbelief: that man can see in a mere human philosophy the reasons for all the rudiments of faith. But, bearing this in mind, it still remains true that the effect of a practice, or a friendship, or a line of thought, or a taste, is, generally speaking, to be tested by the simple practical question whether it does or does not bring the soul nearer to our Lord—whether, like the Jewish law, it is a tutor who keeps the great Master's claim upon his pupil steadily and exclusively in view, or whether it is something else.

2. Observe, too, what may be the religious use of all law—all rule—to the human soul. It should teach man to know from experience something of his weakness, and so should lead him to throw himself upon a higher power for pardon and for strength. The moral law written, indistinctly, on the hearts of the heathen did this great ser-

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vice for the Gentile world. It made the thoughtful heathen look upwards for traces of the invisible law-giver. It rendered him dissatisfied with his own efforts to achieve that which he knew to be certainly right. It led him to yearn, however vaguely, for pardon and for strength, to be received at the hands of an unseen Friend. The rules which we Christians make for our daily lives may help us in the same sort of way. No prudent Christian will live without some rule of life—a rule about prayer, about self-examination, about communions, about personal expenditure, about intercourse with others, about the employment of time, about the study of Scripture, about the management of the temper and the thoughts and the feelings and the resolves of the will. And such a rule is meant, no doubt, to be kept; and in the Church of Jesus Christ, with the aid of His supernatural grace, it can be kept. Every Christian may say with S. Paul, ‘I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.’ But, practically, for the great majority of us, such a rule acts just as the old Jewish law did for the Jews. It is a tutor to bring us afresh, again and again, with a new sense of guilt and of dependence and of weakness, to the feet of our gracious Master. That rule was made, perhaps it was accepted—in some moment of penitence, of fervour, and that moment has passed. Since then we have gone through a time of darkness—of depressed moral effort—of enfeebled resolutions—of shattered hopes, if through nothing worse. And so, with our broken rule of life in our hands, we turn to Him in whose strength we had hoped to keep it. ‘Lord,’ we cry, ‘lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling;
Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and Thou alone.”

Our rule of life itself, just like the Jewish moral law of old, has done us this good service: it has brought us, as a private tutor, down to the school and to the Cross of Christ.

3. And, lastly, in these words we see, or we ought to see, the exceeding preciousness of Christ’s gospel—the matchless value of that faith which lives in the heart of the Church of God. Men sometimes ask the question, whether the gospel, too, is not to be, in turn, a tutor-religion, whose business it is to lead to a something beyond—to some broad and grand and transcendental religion of the future which will control the hearts and the thoughts of the coming generations. The answer is—it must be—from every believing Christian—‘No!

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A thousand times no !' On the one hand, the gospel does or may satisfy all the deepest wants of the human soul—the need of freedom, of peace, of a sense of re-established relations with God, of a good hope for the everlasting future. I say the gospel is so far from pointing to a coming religion which will supersede it, that it everywhere proclaims its own finality. Its motto is, 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Those minds who look beyond it, or would stray beyond it, will, assuredly, find themselves in a blank outer darkness in which even that which the Jewish law could do for them will be left undone. Those who thankfully endeavour, day by day, according to their light, to make the most of it will, as the years pass, have increasing cause to say, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' Depend upon it, the religion of Jesus is God's last word to the soul of man. And how should not we prize the privilege of having received it! Surely this privilege is not a thing to be taken for granted—to be acquiesced in with the tranquil languid apathy with which a Pagan or a Mahometan might receive from his parents his hereditary creed. Each Christian here should glow with a personal sense of love for our divine Redeemer; and this sense must be based on a felt need of Him, and on the recollection that only in the fulness of time He came to satisfy the wants of an expecting world. Mark His own words, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things that ye see and have not seen them, and to hear the things that ye hear and have not heard them.' Why thus blessed? Because Christ, known and loved, is the revelation of the character and the heart of God. Why thus blessed? Because Christ, known and loved, is the fount of pardon, grace, and strength for lost and sinful man. Once more, why thus blessed? Because Christ—and this, we may say reverently, was in His own divine mind and in the mind of His Apostle—because Christ, revealed to man as Incarnate, teaching, crucified, risen, ascended, interceding, closes a long period of weary expectation,—because He is the rest of souls after centuries of labour,—because He is the dawn of day after long ages of darkness and twilight. 'When the fulness of time was come God sent forth,' from His abyss of eternal glory, 'His Son, made of woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Let us pray that in thought and act we may duly prize that which was so long withheld,—that for which our Jewish predecessors were prepared by the tutorial services of their ancient law. Let us, indeed, thank our good God for the gifts of nature—for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life,' but above all, let us thank Him now, and until

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the end, 'for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.'

H. P. LIDDON.

The Commandment exceeding broad.

I have seen an end of all perfection : but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.

PSALM cxix. 96.

I see that all things come to an end : but Thy commandment is exceeding broad. P.B.V.

THE text describes the difference between everything that is of man and everything that is of God. The one has limits, has an end : the other is exceeding broad. Human perfection of all kinds has a visible term and bound : human excellence, human power, human knowledge, human life itself, comes to an end, and is not : but God's commandment, that which God has ordained, that which God has taught, that which God has made known, or is willing to make known, of Himself, of His will, of His truth, of His character, of His glory, is exceeding broad : there is an amplitude in it, and a grandeur, and an abundance, and an expansiveness, which forbids any feeling of straitness or of stint or of cramping : a man may walk and run, as far as he will, in any direction, and he will never find himself at a fence or a boundary : the truth of God, the revelation, the character of God, is infinite like God Himself, and it is His will that we should expatiate in this domain without let or hindrance, without prohibition and without coercion.

The thought thus suggested is a very glorious one, and I propose it for your meditation. 'I see that all things else come to an end : but Thy commandment, Thy revelation, is exceeding broad.' The contrast is that between man's narrowness, in every sense of that word, and God's amplitude, God's grandeur, God's large and satisfying magnificence. We must reflect upon this contrast in some of its particulars.

I. 'I see that all things come to an end': but, 'Thy word endureth for ever in heaven.' What an impression is forced upon us, by the progress of life, of the poverty of man and all that belongs to him, in point of duration ! What a dream is earthly ambition, earthly consequence, earthly rank and wealth and honour ! We ourselves have lived to see men pass through greatness into nothingness. We have flocked to look upon the form of some great general or statesman or potentate, who is now dust and ashes. We have hung upon the lips of some eloquent orator, speaking of things concerning national interest, or interests greater still ; interests of the soul, secrets of eternity ; and those lips are now for ever closed and silent. Others are now the powerful men, the admired men, the revered men - and we are curious, for a day, about them : it is their

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turn: soon it will be the turn of yet another; soon will the stage be occupied by a new set of actors, and gazed upon by a new set of spectators. 'I see that all things come to an end.'

How comforting then, how satisfying, ought it to be to us, to know of just one thing which will not thus fail and terminate! Thy commandment, Thy word! that which God has spoken, whether in the way of disclosure, or of command, or of warning, or of promise. That endures; endureth, as the Psalmist says, for ever in heaven. The march of centuries affects not that. Human opinion, worldly change, the fluctuations of thought or fashion, the rise and fall of men and of nations, work no alteration there.

The Word of God, spoken once with the voice, and now preserved by writing from adulteration and from decay, endures for all time, and is vocal to all sorts and conditions of men: in every land and age, he that is of God, heareth God's Word, and finds in it, whosoever he be, a light to his mind, and a lamp to his steps. 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad.'

II. 'I have seen an end of all perfection.' That which has been said of human life may be said also of human character. We have spoken of man's limits in point of duration; he and all his—enjoyments, projects, interests, attainments, glories—are essentially short-lived and transitory; but the other version of the text seems to extend the remark to a further point; that human excellence, human goodness, has a bound, and a narrow one; if you sound it you reach the bottom; if you measure it, you can take its compass: there is an end of all human perfection, as there is an end of all human duration.

Surely, if in one sense with awe, in another and a higher sense with comfort, we look off from man's littleness to God's greatness, and learn to say, not with humility only, but with thankfulness, 'I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.'

III. The breadth of God's Word in contrast with the narrowness of human doctrine is a topic full of interest. How does the Bible comprehend, and gather into one, all the good parts of the human systems of theology that were ever framed! Every form of error within the Christian community in any age of the Church has arisen, not from the invention of a falsehood, but from the distortion of a truth.

'Thy commandment is exceeding broad': our doctrine, if it is true, must be able to stand this test. Is it the whole, or is it only one part, of the whole counsel of God, as revealed to us in Scripture? Does it embrace within its compass all that God has said; so far, at least, as to exclude and to deny, to force and to mutilate nothing? Few indeed are those ministries, or those schemes of doctrine of

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which this can be said. God grant us the wisdom to aim at it and to attain to it, in some measure, in our own !

DEAN VAUGHAN.

Justification by Faith.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. GALATIANS iii. 24.

‘**T**HAT we might be justified by faith.’ Truly, these are words across which the fierce passions of controversy have swept for centuries; and controversies are apt to leave deposits, which obscure, even in sincere and simple minds, the sense of the sacred writer, when he wrote the words. What does the Apostle mean by ‘justified’? He means made just or righteous. And what is righteousness or justice? As applied to man, it means a man’s being as he should be: it means the conformity, the inner and true conformity, of his life with the standard of that which is good, absolutely good and true. One of the questions which prominently engaged the attention of the Jewish doctors was this, how it was possible for men to attain to righteousness, or justice, and their answer always was ‘By keeping the law.’ For them the law was the rule of righteousness. The Jew who kept the law was righteous. But then, the question which S. Paul pressed on them, again and again, was whether any Jew did really keep it; or rather, he quoted the law itself, with very great effect, to show that, so far from being kept, it was, as a rule, neglected. ‘There is,’ said the law, ‘none righteous, no not one,’ and, ‘therefore,’ concludes the Apostle, ‘therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God’s sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.’

And thus the question arises whether any other method of justification, that is, of becoming what we should be, is attainable. And S. Paul answers that question in the text. The law, he said, led its best pupils down to the school of Christ that they might be justified, not by their own efforts to obey its precepts, but by a very different process, which would in the end, indeed, secure obedience and a great deal else, that they might be justified by faith.

And here a difficulty presents itself, which very naturally and very seriously exercised thoughtful minds in successive ages, and not least in our own. How is it possible, men ask, that such a mere motion or emotion of the soul, as faith, can achieve this startling and solid result, the making a soul to be as it should be before a holy God? A change of conduct, yes, that they conceive, may make the necessary difference. Conduct is something tangible, something producible.

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Conduct is a thing which can be weighed and measured. But faith, how airy, how unsubstantial, how disconnected from any solid, permanent results on character. How nearly allied to the fanciful, to the imaginative. How can faith justify? How can so serious an effect be traced to so inadequate or ineffective a cause? Now, the answer to this inquiry can only be given by stating what faith really is. And, perhaps, we shall best state what faith is, while we proceed to answer the question, how it is that faith justifies or makes men as they should be before God, the All-seeing, the All-holy.

I. Now, here we may observe at the outset that, looking at the surface of the matter, faith does, for the believing man, at least one great and striking service, which of itself goes some way to making him what he should be. Faith raises the aims, the purposes, the thoughts of man from the seen to the unseen, from the material to the immaterial, from earth to or towards heaven. What is man's condition without faith, without that world of glorious but unseen, realities which faith makes present? It is the condition of a slave. Unbelieving man is always a slave, the slave of nature, the slave of matter. When no higher world than the world of sense is open to man's view, he falls back under the cruel and exacting bondage of sense and nature. His horizon is that of his bodily senses, neither more nor less, his thoughts and feelings are bounded by that which he can see, can taste, can handle or claw, can smell. To him the visible world is the universe. To him, he himself, and his brother man, is but an animal, a magnificent animal no doubt, yet nothing but an animal. He notes with eager and jealous accuracy how the process of birth and growth, and disease, and death, and decomposition, are the same in his own case, and that of the brutes around him. With him, feeling is only nervous sensibility, thought is only phosphorus, the soul, a non-existent abstraction which man in his petty vanity has coaxed out of the higher illusions of his senses. And thus he buries his thought deep in the very folds of matter. And his thought, mark you, may be all the while exceptionally keen and strong, yet not therefore the less enslaved to matter. Perhaps he has no turn for abstract speculations, and nevertheless in the absence of faith he is still occupied, nearly or wholly occupied, by that which comes in contact with the senses. His shop, or his broad acres, or his family circle, or his enjoyments, are for him the universe; he sees no horizon beyond. And since nothing is more certain than the law whereby we men, each one of us, become likened to that on which we gaze, heavenly, if we are looking upward, earthly, or worse, if we are looking downward, it follows that the man who lives in and for matter will gather more and more of its thick grossness around his spirit.

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And if his understanding warns him that the material world which is his all, will pass, and if, in his higher moments, voices sound from out the depths of his being to protest impatiently that matter does not satisfy, still the motto of those who are taking their fill of sense, whether in its grosser or more refined forms, is, in the last resort, always this, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' The nobler minds of every generation have felt the misery of this. They have felt that man was meant for a higher destiny than this enslavement to nature, to matter, to sense; and, in the absence of any better expedients, they have endeavoured to provide an escape by the exercise of the intelligence, and the exercise of the imagination, in other words, by poetry and by philosophy.

II. Poetry is, at least very frequently, the endeavour to invest human life with the glow and beauty of a higher sphere. Poetry is the protest of the human soul against enslavement to the prosaic uniformity of materialised existence. Poetry is the effort of the imagination to provide an outlook for all in man that will not, that cannot, consent to believe that man is nothing but a highly organised animal. And philosophy is the endeavour to ascend without the emotion which is characteristic of poetry, to ascend from that which meets the senses to that which is beyond the senses, to mount always from the observed effect to the hidden and producing cause, to construct, if it may be, an account and a theory of universal being, and, in the process of doing so, to provide for the thought of man an asylum, or rather a throne, beyond and above the frontiers of matter. And thus, in their different ways, philosophy and poetry imply the degradation of merely materialised life by their efforts to better it. And I am very far from denying that they have, each of them, made noble contributions to the higher side of human existence. Sometimes, indeed, in the great Christian ages, they have been the willing handmaids of faith herself; but, even in the centuries when this was impossible, they have done something to raise the human spirit out of the narrow prison-house of matter. And Homer, and Æschylus, and Socrates, and Plato, with whatever reserves, will be names held in high honour to the end of time. But, whatever poetry and philosophy might achieve for a few individuals, or in the hands of great masters, they do not, in the long run, free the minds of men from the tyranny of matter. Indeed, their fitful efforts to achieve this may remind us of the flying machine which it was attempted to construct some thirty years ago on the banks of the Thames. Imagination, such is the verdict of experience, imagination, if unsustained by a heaven-born companion like faith, does not mount upwards in one generation to surrender itself in the next, almost at discretion, to the grossest suggestions of

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the senses. And philosophy, if not based on certainties beyond the reach of sense, does but construct its imposing abstractions in one age to shatter them into fragments in the next, and then it ends, as with the Epicureans of antiquity, as with the school which has last appeared on the scene, in Germany, it ends by plunging headlong into matter with a new and impetuous enthusiasm, and prostituting its powers to reconstructing the very fetters from which, centuries ago, in its fresh and early youth, it promised us emancipation.

No, if man is to be freed from the empire of sense and nature, it must be through his endowment with a new faculty, such as is faith; and faith is a new kind of sight which opens upon the soul a world wholly beyond the reach of the bodily senses. Faith is practically a new sense, a sense, whose business it is to discern God, and all that teaches His nature and His action upon the world and upon mankind.

III. Faith makes the man who possesses it to differ from the man who has it not, much as a person in the enjoyment of good bodily sight differs from a blind man. 'Faith,' as the Apostle puts it, 'is the substance of things hoped for; it is the evidence of things not seen.' It is evidence to itself, sufficient evidence, of the reality of its object; and thus faith cannot but at least elevate man, with the unseen world spread out before him, the magnificence, the infinitude of the Divine Being, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ upon His throne, both God and Man, the unnumbered angelic intelligences around the throne, the little suspected, but constant, incessant, communications passing between earth and heaven. Faith introduces the soul of man to a new sphere in which the soul is sensibly bettered, if only by this, by having its attention distracted from the petty material interests of daily human life, and fixed on the splendours of the unseen, of the eternal; and thus faith does raise the soul of man heavenwards, and this elevation of the soul, more solid and permanent than anything which can possibly be provided by poetry or philosophy, in that it brings the soul face to face with the true and the unchanging being, is of itself a considerable step in the direction of making a man what he should be, in other words, of his justification.

And a second service which faith renders to man, is this; it expands and strengthens all the department of his spirit's life, his will and his affections not less than his understanding. And this wide and comprehensive scope of its action upon the soul of itself does much to make man what he should be, since not one power or faculty is invigorated by it, but all. There we come face to face with a great and common misconception, the mistake, I mean, of supposing that faith is only a mere act of apprehension, only a

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simple movement of the understanding apprehending truth beyond the province of sense. Such an act of apprehension as this can only be faith by courtesy, for faith in its origin, as well as in its growth and vitality, is a prompting of the heart and the will, at least as much as of the understanding. 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,' and this moral element in faith is the guarantee of its power to change the character. If we doubt this, let us try to explain to ourselves how it is that of two heathens similarly circumstanced, to whom the gospel is preached by a Christian missionary, one accepts, and the other rejects it; or how it is, as we may see in many an English home, that of two brothers who have had equally the same education, one is a devout Christian and the other an unbeliever. The explanation which is often given refers this difference to God's secret and eternal predestination of souls. The old words, 'He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth,' seem to yield a stern but an adequate solution. But God's predestination of souls, however true and solemn a fact, is only half of the truth which explains the soul's destiny. It is equally true, though we may be unable to reconcile this truth with the foregoing, it is equally true that every soul determines its own destiny, and that God's predestination is never really arbitrary in the sense of being independent of the soul's secret, self-determined history. When, of the two heathens I am considering, one man accepts the faith as it is proposed to him, and the other rejects it, this, we may be sure, so far as the man is concerned, is not an accident: it is an effect of causes which have been already long in duration. If these two men have known from infancy nothing else, they have known this, that there is a distinction between right and wrong, since this knowledge is part of the human soul. What is right and what is wrong, that they may have apprehended very imperfectly. They cannot have been ignorant that this primal distinction exists. And this distinction of itself, observe, this distinction implies a law, a law of right as distinct from wrong; and a law implies a lawgiver. Who is He? What is He? What can be known about Him? Will He ever reveal Himself? These are questions which will be repeated again and again in the one mind, eager, by searching, to find out God, ready to make the most of anything which He may disclose about Himself; but they will be repressed and silenced in the other mind, as if they were the mere echoes of some stupid superstition. The distinction between right and wrong, itself, it has been said, by one who felt thus, in the midst of Christian civilisation, can only be upheld by a man with a bad digestion. Well, then, on this original difference in the way of treating the sense, the implanted sense of right and wrong will

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subsequently depend the different kinds of welcome given to the missionary, nay, the grave difference between faith and unbelief. The one man wishes to know nothing of the author of the moral law that haunts him. The other wishes to know as much as he can. And thus, to the one man, the evidence that God has revealed Himself will appear wholly insufficient. To the other it will seem to be nothing less than overwhelming.

And thus we see how faith is originally prompted by the moral affections, and the will—how, in point of fact, it grows directly out of these. Men believe, because they wish to believe, if they can, and think that the evidence they have warrants them in doing so. They reject belief, as a rule, because there is a secret warp in their will against the truths which are the objects of faith. ‘Light,’ said our Lord, ‘Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.’ And as faith is cradled in the heart and the will, so it is never independent of them. It is an act of the moral nature, as well as of the understanding, from first to last. No doubt the word faith is used, by an accommodation, of mere unfruitful knowledge of divine things, as when S. James says that the devils believe and tremble. The devils think of God just as a scientific man might think of a natural catastrophe, which he was certain would occur, say the outbreak of a volcano, or a hurricane. They think of God with intelligence, with curiosity, but also with aversion. Having, as they have at command, the opportunities of disembodied spirits, whether good or evil, they cannot close their eyes to God’s existence, to His power; but they recognise Him only to fear and to hate Him. They believe, and yet tremble. This is an extreme example of the apprehension of God divorced from love. But something like it may be observed in all who hold the truth in unrighteousness. The faith, of which S. Paul says so much in his epistles, is inseparable from love, inseparable in life and fact, though quite separable in idea in our way of looking at it. As the illuminated understanding gazes on the majesty and on the attributes of God, on the person and the redeeming work of Christ, the heart is withal kindled, and the will is braced. Faith which deserves the name worketh ever, and it worketh by love. Faith may be taken to pieces by students and divines; its elements may be sorted out; its mental element may be studied apart from the ingredients of love and of resolution which go to make it up, just as the anatomist in our hospitals may treat the arterial system apart from the nervous system of the human body, although, in the living subject, each is essential to its vitality. We may, if we like, fix our eyes only on the concave, but it always implies the convex. Those who have gone furthest in the direction of saying

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that faith, considered as pure mental apprehension of the person and merits of Christ, can justify before God, have not, so far as I know, ventured to say that any one human being is justified who is quite without a ray of the love of God in his soul. No. Read through the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to see what faith is in itself, how practical, how productive a thing it is, how much it leads those who really possess it, upon occasions, to do and to suffer; and then you will understand how it enriches the whole inward life, how powerfully it contributes to make man what he should be, in other words to his justification.

III. But, thirdly and finally, the greatest service which faith renders is this: it receives at God's hand the perfect righteousness of Christ. Faith is itself a hand which the soul extends towards the heavens, or with which it grasps the Redeemer's Cross. That which really makes us men what we should be is not, cannot be, in or of ourselves. It comes to us from without, from the one perfect and sinless Being. And faith is the receptive faculty, or the receptive act, whereby the soul makes this prerogative gift of justification altogether its own. S. Paul is never tired of saying that man cannot be as he should be, that he cannot be just or righteous, without Jesus Christ. The Jew cannot, because, although he had a revealed law, he did not keep it. The heathen cannot. He, too, has a natural law written on his heart, but he falls short of it. The heathen do not seem, as far as the Apostle's experience goes, to have supposed that they were absolutely righteous. The Jew did go about to establish his own righteousness, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God. But the hard fact is that 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;' and, therefore it is that justification, properly speaking, can only come to us from without. Faith itself would not justify. Faith would lack its elevating, its productive power, if it had not before it an object utterly independent of human sin and of human weakness, an object divine, unchanging, immaculate. We cannot raise ourselves from the dust. A moral law of gravitation keeps the fallen race down. We must be lifted, if at all, by a hand reached out to us from above. If justified at all, we must be 'justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'

Yes, Christ Jesus, who alone of those who have worn the human form is as He should be, whose life, public and secret, conforms perfectly to the absolute rule of right, Christ Jesus, the beloved Son in whom the all-perfect Father is well pleased, is the source of justification to all His brethren. He has done away with their imperfections by bearing their sins in His Body on the tree. He has given them a share in His obedience, His transcending and pre-

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vailing merits. He is their peace. He is made to them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. It is not that His righteousness is accredited to them by a kind of fiction, without being conveyed. It is accredited or imputed because it is already in His purposes of mercy conveyed, because, in His generous love, he consents to share it with the poorest and the weakest of His brethren. On His part, this great gift, purchased in its completeness on His Cross, is conveyed by His Spirit and by His Sacraments. His Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ, because it is His work to make us partakers in the perfect manhood of the divine Redeemer. His Sacraments could have no place at all in a religion like His unless it were a place of the very first importance. Mere graceless forms would be intruders in a dispensation where forms and shadows have given place once for all to the everlasting realities. It is through these channels that He dispenses what He has won, nay, rather, what He is. 'As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.' 'The Bread that I give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'

But, on our part, how are these treasures to be claimed? How is the human soul to grasp this righteousness of God in Christ? The answer is 'by faith.'

Faith is the hand which the soul holds out in order to receive the gifts of heaven. In the case of every adult it is indispensable. God may in His mercy take infants up in His arms and bless them. The grace of regeneration, like the gift of natural life, may be conferred on those who are as yet unconscious of its greatness. But, as Augustine has said, 'He who made us without ourselves, He who re-made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves,' without our conscious and deliberate acceptance of His salvation. And this acceptance of God's final gift is effected by faith. Faith is the spiritual act whereby the soul associates itself with the perfect moral Being, Jesus Christ, whereby it make His righteousness, His obedience, His sufferings, its own—whereby it lays strong hold upon His Cross, as on the very source and warrant of its victory—whereby it draws from His Sacraments the virtue which He in His redemptive love has lodged in them—whereby the sinner, penitent and self-renouncing, is forthwith clad in His garments of salvation, and covered with His robe of righteousness, and bidden to sit down in the heavenly places in the Eternal Father's home. Yes, faith is the action of the awakened soul, consciously face to face with its Redeemer and its God. In a being capable of it, it is indispensable. Without faith there may be vigorous physical and mental life, but the spirit is dead. It must raise us from the dust of earth. It—the product of affection and of will—must rouse will and affection to

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renewed activity. Above all, it—faith—the spirit of prayer—must be a suppliant, an importunate suppliant, kneeling on the steps of the throne of heaven to receive for man—we may dare to say to claim for man—the perfections which man cannot himself command, and which alone can make himself to be what he should be—the priceless gift of his justification through Christ. ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life.’

Let us rouse ourselves to beg God to give us in new measure this great and necessary grace, without which, as His Apostle has said, it is impossible to please Him. Now, as in bygone days, faith is given—faith is strengthened—in answer to prayer. ‘Lord, increase our faith.’ ‘Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.’ These breathings of the human soul eighteen centuries ago are not less powerful with God now than in the days of old, nor are the issues which depend upon their being answered less momentous, whether in time or in eternity.

H. P. LIDDON.

The Pharisee as a Religious Expert.

Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

S. MATTHEW xvi. 9.

THE Pharisee was the man who knew, the initiated. He could discern and pronounce on the methods of morals and religion with qualified and professional accuracy. He had the scientific religion, the rules and methods and conditions under which God could be properly approached. He knew so much more about this than other men, they must come to him to learn their lesson, he was the corrector of the ignorant, the teacher of babes. Now, we are all familiar with the temper and the attitude that the expert is apt to acquire. The exclusive temper of the profession—how it daunts us who are of the uninitiated! how it quails our loose and airy amateur ways of speaking! The musical expert, for instance, who just lets us know, by dropping a few technical phrases upon us, how far we are from being within the circle of those who are qualified to speak. We cannot cope with his smile at our untechnical terms. He is within the ring of scientific authority, and we are outside it. Evidently our blundering attempts to express what we feel have violated some canon of taste or other, have revealed our total ignorance of some essential rule, we do not quite know what it is, in which we are wrong, but we see in his face that he considers our simple remarks to be absolutely worthless. He is too courteous not to pretend to listen, but he is not paying us the slightest attention, and we

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feel the shadow of his contempt fall on us, and our courage flags. It is no use our talking, we had better be silent ; so we think, and he evidently perfectly agrees with us. Or the expert in ritual—here is an expert who is also a terror to us. We venture on a chance observation, and we have let out some unhappy expression that reveals that we do not know in the least the distinction between the Gallican and Sarum use, and in a moment we are out of spirit—we have lost all standing-ground. Our confusion is explained to us with kindly precision, and we are humbled, we resign the conversation to those initiated, who can discourse in the true language that is all the more pleasant because it is so bewildering to those that are without.

I. Now, in such cases we can laugh at our own discomfiture, and, indeed, it is very often good to learn that, in a scientific matter, the easy suggestions of an amateur are not so important as they are apt to appear to the person who makes them. But in religion the temper of the expert becomes a positive and perilous temptation. It is deadly to religion to become in any sense the appropriated prize of the privileged few. In all matters of high scientific knowledge this of course is inevitably the case. Only the few have the requisite leisure and the appropriate faculties to acquire the particular skill in this or that branch of learning. There must of necessity be a close exclusive ring of skilled authorities who alone are entitled to speak. This is the condition of intellectual knowledge—it must be largely in the hands of trained experts. But then it is just because it is so that religion has never based itself primarily on the intellect, on knowledge. Whenever it has done so it has tended to make itself at once the privilege of the few, and in doing this has committed the blunder which is fatal to its life. It was the deadly result which forbade Platonism ever to pass outside the schools and to become an operative faith in the world. It strove to do this in the great reaction of Neo-platonism in the third century, but it could make no way against the onward push of Christianity, cumbered as it was by its fatal distinction between the esoteric truth of the few and the exoteric condition of the many. And the Church, we know, recognised and repudiated the same temptation in the subtle fascinations of Alexandrian Gnosticism. Once rest religion on Gnosis or knowledge, and the religious expert is bound to appear on the scene, the skilled proficient in the spiritual science must seem to stand on a higher religious level than the untrained mass of ignorant men ; and let me repeat, to allow this is to strike at the very root of religion, for religion is bound by its very nature to be the great equalising force which shall get behind all the separations and distinctions which part man from man, behind all that makes one man a barbarian and another a cultivated Greek, one man a bondsman and another man

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free, one man gifted and another man simple, one man rich and another man poor. These differences are all real enough, God knows. They have their place, their part to play, but for all that they do not constitute the final fact of human nature. Deep below all incidental differences of capacity, of opportunity, of education, of race, and of sex, lies the fundamental unity which holds all in one touch of innermost nature which makes all akin. And religion, which enters deepest into man, enters down to the lowest recesses of his being, must strike its roots down into this primitive and unchanging unity.

II. It is religion on which we count to detect and unearth for us this inner sense of community which is so sorely strained by the competition of rival divergencies. That competition of race against race, and gift against gift, of capital against labour, of supply and demand, must of necessity continue. Out of it proceeds some part of the fulness of our civic activity; but just because it has to continue is it so urgent for us to balance and to correct its separating force by a counter force of attractive, sympathetic, co-operative tendency, which shall recover for us, and retain, and assert the substantial unity still alive at the base. The more men plead for the necessities of competition, the more emphatically do they assert the necessity of its co-ordinate and corrective antithesis. If we compete, then there must be that which can balance and redress the exaggerations of competition, and if civilisation tends, as it does, in many ways to intensify our difference one from another, then civilisation must always be crying out also for that which can intensify our common humanity. And it is religion on which we primarily count to do this for us, to equalise, to universalise; it is the only power that fully can, for it is the only power that can dig down low enough in that which makes us men to arrive at that common and universal substance which makes us all children of one Father, citizens of one kingdom, heirs of one home, limbs of one body, members one of another. Religion appeals to that which is at the very base of our life, to that which, in making us men, gives us an immediate interest in everything that is human. It appeals to that which makes no man a stranger to his fellows, makes every one his brother's keeper, makes our affairs to be every one's affairs and every one's affairs to be ours. And this is why civilisation increases our need for a religion, for it renders more and more urgent the demand for this force which can control and overthrow the intensified differences which it is apt to create, and can rescue and redeem for us that peace of brotherhood which it by itself is prone to weaken and disguise. Religion alone can fully do this on behalf of civilisation, and this signalises for us two emphatic claims that we make for our own religion.

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1. First, Christianity is for this reason, we say, the very crown of all religions, in that it achieves for us that which other religions had but partially proclaimed. It undertakes to complete the cardinal office of the faith when it offers us a Son of Man in whose single unity all distinctions are transcended, all divergencies disappear, in whom there is no barrier between man and man, no privileged position or special honour allowed, in whom there can be neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Greek nor barbarian, neither bond nor free. This is the aim at which the spirit in us struggles to attain, and the very completeness with which Christianity can offer to meet the demand of the human spirit for unity is the measure of its catholicity. It is adapted for all peoples, and tongues, and nations, only so far as it can bring them that which goes down beneath all that separates them into tongues, and nations, and peoples. And, again, this is why, as we believe with all our souls, Christianity is the one religion that can hope to meet the special needs of our advanced and intricate civilisation, because it can dare to override and dominate every conceivable difference of gift, or of condition, which our competitions can create. It can bring them all under a common standard, can reduce them all to a common level, it can undermine and overleap them, it can drag them before a judgment-bar at which they find themselves no longer absolute, by which they are re-sorted and resifted. It holds them down within the prevailing grip of a law by which the first may become the last, and the last first; it can present a hope in which all have an equal claim, an equal interest, an equal task, and an equal reward. It can deliver us out of the broil and tumult of competitive cries, carrying us off into that background of peace where all these weary and wasting differences cease and are forgotten, merged in the depths of that changeless unity which lies spread before the throne of God, and over which the spirit of brotherhood ever broods, the spirit that makes all to be of one mind in one house, knitting all in its one Lord by the power of one faith, through the mystery of one baptism, so that all are gathered up into one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all, and in you all. That is religion, and anything, therefore, that tends to limit it to privileged experts, that tends to confine the interests of religion within a ring-fence, within a narrow circle of skilled professors, which tends to form a stiff, rigid group of the devout, shut up within their own excellencies, and who look out at the main mass of men as those who, not knowing the law, are therefore accursed. Anything that does that cuts at the root of religion itself, cuts at the very root of our faith in Jesus Christ.

2. But perhaps you will say: 'Is not religion of necessity exclusive? Was it not foretold that it should be for the few, that it involved a strait gate and a narrow way, and that few would find it? Does

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it not call upon us to cut ourselves off from the multitude and from the world, and not to be afraid to be a little flock, separate and confined? And then, again, if science is exclusive, Christianity has its science. It has its moral science which builds up saints, and it has its intellectual science, the theology of the Creeds, and both these have the peculiarity of a science, they involve care, minute attention, deliberate pains, whether to form the saintly life, or to apprehend and secure the minutiae of the Catholic Creed; and such care, minute and scientific, such attention, never can be possible for the multitude, must always surely be the privilege of the few.' Now, in all such pleas as these there is just that half-truth which is for ever beguiling us religious people. This is just what is so apt to make us all Pharisees, to form in us the repellent temper of the professional spiritual expert. Let us look at these statements, these pleas, a little closer. There is a theological science, for instance, we say, and the science is of necessity exclusive, for the few. Exactly! and that is why the Church has so emphatically and continuously asserted that theological knowledge is not faith. It has always refused to identify its science with its religion. God, it proclaims, does not propose to save the world by dialectic. 'What boots it to talk deeply of the Holy Three,' says Thomas à Kempis, in well-known words, 'if, lacking humility, you grieve the Holy Three? Far rather would I feel sorrow for my sins than know how to define the feeling with accuracy.' The loud warning has ever gone out to man to beware lest in preaching to others, and preaching right, he himself becomes, after all, a castaway; lest, teaching in Christ's name, he himself be pronounced unknown at the last to the very Master whose gospel he has so successfully delivered to others. It is faith that saves, not theological accuracy, not syllogism. Faith is demanded of the Christian scientific expert in exactly the same sense in which it is demanded of the most ignorant man alive, the faith of the meek and humble spirit, the faith of the contrite heart. True, that faith holds in it theology, though theology need not hold in it faith. There is no sincere faith which cannot, under analysis, yield a rational account of itself—be theologically interpreted and justified. Faith that fails to give an intellectual response to such an analysis, properly conducted, must be a poor and sickly affair; but, for all that, the analysis is not faith, the faculty that justifies the faith is not that with which we believe. The faith may be there in all its fulness, and yet be just as unable to supply its own intellectual interpretations as an athlete may be to explain the splendid precision of his eye, or hand, or foot, for faith is not a mere activity of the understanding or the reason, but a motion, an act, of the inner sonship in man towards the Father whose life is in him. And such a motion, such an act, is

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possible to all equally, beneath all conceivable differences of condition, and may be far more deep and genuine in the ignorant and the poor than it is in the finest and subtlest brain in Christendom. Christianity, then, in claiming to have a theology, never suffers this its scientific and exclusive side to usurp for a moment its wide and catholic appeal to the elemental unity of all mankind through sonship to the Father.

Nor, again, does Christianity ever permit its moral science to limit its range to the few, great though has been its constant temptation. Certainly it invites some to a specialised life of piety; it asks them to withdraw from busy occupation and to give themselves up to the discipline of an ordered life of devotion; it urges them to attempt the peculiar task of developing the excellencies of the saints, such as can only be done by steady self-committal to fixed and painstaking rules, methods, aids, practices, such as are impossible to those engaged in worldly business, such as are only possible to some small knots of secluded people knit closely to one another, both by system and by sympathy. It asks for these, and it needs them; and a Church that is sterile in such typical expressions of its life, that has no soil in which to plant such souls as feel the call to this regulated life of piety, is below its true level, and is false to that Master, who to the eager-hearted soul that He loved made the offer, 'Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow Me.' And, thank God, our own Church, once so dry and so dead, is no longer barren of such rare fruit. But here, again, there must be no mistake. All such special efforts are morally doomed from the hour that they begin to assume to themselves a right to be the only true and formal embodiment of grace. The one deadly error of the monastic orders was to arrogate a speciality of grace. The moment this assumption is made, the moment that the secular life outside the religious discipline is treated as an inferior form of Christianity, as a condescension to the world, then, since far the largest section of believers must always be secular, Christianity has been made the peculiar privilege of the few, and the main mass of men and women are thrown outside the world of grace. But all Christian ethics protest against this assumption, and they do so by declaring that the only good thing which God asks for is the good will, is the sacrificial will, and that this good will may be made manifest, may be surrendered under the humblest and most earthly conditions as much as in the most secluded and select religious order. No system, however elaborate, can secure it, no circumstances, however base and rough, fail to give it its opportunity. The sacrifice of self, the only thing worth doing, this may be made always, equally and everywhere, and the more worldly and untractable the conditions the more precious may be the offering of the will

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which accepts the worst and turns it to spiritual profit. One soul may be called to make this act of will in one direction and one in another, one in the thick of the world and the other in the quiet retreat, but no man can say which call is more excellent in itself, and God may always be winning a more perfect fruit from the simple self-surrender of some poor and infirm crossing-sweeper than from all those who seven times a day bend low before His blessed altar in the hushed beauty hidden there of some breathless shrine.

III. So it is, Christianity is exclusive no doubt in its inward call; it bids us come aside out of the world, to labour to enter at the strait gate, to go with the few along the narrow way. All this it does, and does austere; but though this call be exclusive, its interests are always catholic, and its outlook is always wide and universal, and nothing that is human is alien to it, and nothing that has ever been made is outside its concern. And the few then who are drawn apart are not drawn apart for themselves, for the sake of working out their own perfection. It is, as we know, for the sake of others, for the whole, that they are numbered among the elect souls; it is on behalf of the many that the few are drawn apart; they are to be the first-fruits by which the whole lump becomes holy, they are to be the seed which witnesses to the life yet stirring in the trunk of the tree which looks so dead; they are to be pledges, witnesses before God of the possibilities yet open to His Church: and, as Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob stood over the people of Israel, through the ages, interceding for them with their names, with God, so these saints are the pleas and the prayers sent up before God, that He may have patience, that He may have mercy upon all His stubborn and stiff-necked people. Pledges they are to God, and pledges, too, before men, and examples to them of the wonderful things their own Father which is in Heaven is longing to work out on all His children that are here on earth. Such is the sacred mission of the remnant and of the few, and so, if they remember it, then their interests can never be shut up within that spot of glorious light wherein they themselves are dwelling. From within that ring of light their eyes, their hearts go out far, roaming, yearning after those who know not as yet their joys, the black wide masses who grope in darkness and cannot find their peace. How pitiful to them is that darkness, how tenderly the hearts within the light grieve over the loss of those without! 'How is it that they will not know, how can they be told all that God would do for them if only they would let Him? how can the message of His love reach to them?' So the saints keep crying out with ever-increasing tendency, and ever they learn that all their own holiness is solely of God, is none of their own doing, and that therefore there is no one in whom God would not and could not do all that

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He does in them. Any one might have it, any one might know it. There can be no merit in those who have by God's good mercy found it. They have been suffered to discover this secret first, but others, they too will find it out one day.

How dear, how precious does all this weltering, forlorn, bewildered human life become in their eyes as they see in themselves the care, the kindness, the love, the abundance which God is prepared to shower upon it. Their own growth in holiness is but a revelation to them how deeply God cares for all that is human, and so ever deeper and tenderer their own sympathy for humanity becomes, deepened and enriched as it is beyond its natural limits by the powers of divine compassion, which show themselves through it. And ever, as they learn, these saints, through their very pity for man, their own impotence to persuade him to open his eyes to the secret which might be his, as they learn that more and more ever they will be lifting their eyes with appealing tears to God who alone can bring light into the darkness, praying Him to make manifest to others that wonderful work which He has achieved for His own glory, praying that all may know, that all may become prophets, that all may speak with tongues, praying, and so rising ever nearer and nearer to the mighty outburst of S. Paul's great prayer, prayer for his own darkened people, his own brethren in the flesh: 'My heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved:' 'before God I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness; I have great sorrow and increasing pain in my heart for them; yea, I could even wish myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, for my kinsmen according to the flesh.'

Dearly beloved, how is it that those of us who are led to believe in God are always losing hold of this high mission? Somehow we do still so often shut ourselves up within the ring-fence, so many do get to think that God's love is bounded by that which they happen to know of it. We do narrow down our vision and cramp our spiritual motives, so that the mighty issues of the Incarnation are all cut down to the measure of that particular insight which it is our blessed privilege to have been permitted to possess, our own favourite methods of approach to God, the methods which are to us the particular channels down which the grace has flowed in upon ourselves. These preoccupy so often our whole vision, these block up the horizon, and every other way by which God and man can come together. We distrust and disown, we see nothing to learn in it, and perhaps we think all those who are without our particular vision are Atheists, and so we become hard and cold, and the stiff tough shell of the Pharisee builds itself about us, and, instead of being pledges to those outside of the light and the joy to be found in Christ, we repel them,

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and we throw them back, and no touch of human sympathy goes out from us to win them home; rather they sheer off from us, they stare in surprise and dislike at us. And so we fail in our mission and disappoint God's working.

Take heed and beware of this leaven of the Pharisee, of this loveless and unlovely temper of the religious expert, of this faith which can, in its tough vigour, perhaps even give its body, in all bravery, to be burned, and yet hath not charity, and profiteth nothing. Our personal call, we repeat, is indeed to be exclusive, to be strict, to be rigid. God calls us to go forward on the narrow path, through the strait gate, along the path of ever sharpening discipline, cutting off all that is unprofitable. This is our personal, individual call. Woe to us if we are slack and easy-going; but while He asks us to be strict with ourselves, He desires that we shall, by the power of this strictness, learn the width, and height, and depth of His abounding love, that we should, by means of our fidelity to the single path of recovery open to us, learn to imagine by how many diverse roads God is recalling to Himself His erring ones, how rich are His resources, how manifold His wisdom, how subtle, how varied His appeals. Our limit to our own discipline is never to blind us to these many methods which God will adopt, modifying His own action to meet the endless diversities of this nature which God has made Himself so exuberant. Some methods are wrong, and, if they are, let us say so, but they are not wrong because they differ from ours; and differences and diversity of methods, far from exciting our disgust or distrust, ought to be a delight and proof to our souls of the freedom and fertility of God. The more we know of Him, the more shall we be on the look-out for surprises, for wonders, for strange liberty of action in His handling of men, the less shall we tie Him down to particular methods and rules, however precious they are to us in our spiritual growth. Only one thing we shall care about, that whatever the diversities of operation, it still shall be directed by the one Spirit, and bear witness to one Christ. One sure test of our love we shall always look out for, one sure sign we shall anxiously seek—the sign in our own souls of the love, of the width of love, for the more we know of God, the more love we shall have for our fellow-men. As we look out from within our own blessedness upon those outside, we shall love them more and more, and the further off they are now from God the more tenderly will our loving pity move out towards them; for if our faith be loyal and true, then the more deeply will it be penetrated within and without with that charity which 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'

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VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

Promise. THE specific form of the whole gospel is promise, which
GAL. iii. 16. God gives in the Word, and causes to be preached. The last period of the world is the reign of grace (Rom. v. 21). Grace reigns in the Word, only as promise. Grace has nothing to do with law and requisition of law, therefore the word of that grace can be no other than a word of promise. For to this end Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant, that we might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Heb. ix. 15). The promise of life in Christ Jesus is the word of the New Covenant (2 Tim. i. 1). The difference between the Gospel of the Old Covenant and that of the New rests alone on the transcendently greater glory of its promise (Heb. viii. 6; xi. whole). That these great and precious promises are given to us (2 Pet. i. 4; 2 Cor. vii. 1) establishes the position of a Christian man; if he calls himself a son and heir, he has no other title for this except that of promise alone, purely of grace (Gal. iv. 28; Rom. iv. 16). That, and how God, for His own sake blots out our transgressions, and remembers our sin no more (Isa. xliii. 25), is the substance of the word of promise in the New Testament, and which confirms that of the Old.

Promises and the Bible. THE Bible is a book of promises, as well as of revelations, or divine statements. These promises are our
GAL. iii. 16. heritage.

Faith in the promises makes the future present, and the heirship possession. It is thus, 'the substance of things hoped for.' Shall the promises fail? Is God unfaithful? Shall a Queen Elizabeth value her promise, as when she gave the first vacancy to one unfit? Shall a Chatham have a wall rebuilt, rather than seem to break a promise to his son? Shall a Napier refuse an invitation that he may keep a promise to a poor girl? And shall God refuse to honour drafts made on His promise in the name of His Son? Shall the promises fail? Is there inability or unwillingness to perform?

Promises and Payment. SATAN promises the best, but pays with the worst.

He promises honour, and pays with disgrace.

GAL. iii. 16. He promises pleasure, and pays with pain.

He promises profit, and pays with loss.

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He promises life, and pays with death.

But God pays as He promises ; all His payments are made in pure gold.

Mediator. It was necessary that our Mediator should be both God
GAL. iii. 19-29. and Man, that He might take care of the interests both of the Creator and His creatures.

There are in the world that think it too great sauciness to be our own spokesman to God ; and, therefore, go to S. Somebody, to prefer their petitions for them. I shall ever hold it good manners to go of my own errands to God. He that bids me come, will bid me welcome. God hath said, 'Come unto Me,' etc. It is no unmannerliness to come when I am called (S. Matt. xi. 28).

Merciful A TRAVELLER relates that, when passing through an
Severely. Austrian town, his attention was directed to a forest
GAL. iii. 16, etc. on a slope near the road, and he was told that death was the penalty of cutting down one of those trees. He was incredulous until he was further informed that they were the protection of the city, breaking the force of the descending avalanche which, without this natural barrier, would sweep over the homes of thousands. When a Russian army was there and began to cut away the fence for fuel, the inhabitants besought them to take their dwellings instead, which was done. Such he well thought are the sanctions of God's moral law. On the integrity and support of that law depends the safety of the universe. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die' is a merciful proclamation. 'He that offends in one point is guilty of all,' is equally just and benevolent. To transgress once is to lay the axe at the foot of the tree which represents the security and peace of every loyal soul in the wide dominions of the Almighty.

A Christian, AN Austrian officer arrived one day in a town in Ger-
Neighbour. many celebrated for its baths. He seemed very near his
S. JOHN ix. 23-30. end, and, in consequence, he was refused admission at several hotels, whose proprietors feared he would die on their hands. When he presented himself at the last hotel at which he could hope to get rooms, he received the same answer : there were none vacant.

A gentleman living in the hotel heard the landlord's answer, and noted the condition of the applicant. 'This officer is my near relation,' he said, stepping forward, 'and I shall share my room with him. He may have my bed and I can sleep on the sofa.' The landlord felt obliged to consent, and the invalid was carried to the room of his newly-found friend. When he had recovered strength

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enough to speak, he said: 'May I ask your name, my kind friend? How are you related to me?—on what side?'

'I am related to you,' was the reply, 'through our Lord Jesus Christ, for I have learned from Him that my neighbour is my brother.'

This stranger brother maintained the character he thus claimed. He nursed his guest tenderly, and carried to him with his own hand the first glass of medical water, and sought, while thus ministering to his body, to lead him to Jesus, the physician of the soul.

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